

A
PRACTICAL
TREATISE
OF
SAVING FAITH,
IN THREE PARTS.

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M DCC XXX.

PART THE FIRST.

OF THE

OBJECT

OF

SAVING FAITH.

THE light of nature teaches men, that there is a God, and that he is to be served, adored and revered by all his creatures, because they received their being from his power, and are sustained by his providence, and supported by his bounty; this, which is imperfectly dictated by reason, is abundantly confirmed by revelation. Man, as he came pure out of the hands of his Maker, enjoyed his favour, was free from his displeasure, and had intimate fellowship and communion with him; had he continued in a state of honour, his life would have been a scene of continued pleasure, arising from the intercourse his soul would have kept up with

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the author of all good: as he had a clear knowledge of God, so, whilst he was attired with the robe of innocence, he trusted in him with a firm faith, and served him with a perfect heart. If we consider man as revolted, it must be owned that the case is altered unspeakably for the worse; by reason of the darkness and confusion brought in by the fall, tho' men know there is a God, yet, as long as they are in a state of nature, they trust not in him in a right way; neither can they have any comfort in trusting in him, as an absolute God, because his justice, holiness, and truth are engaged against them; therefore it is necessary, in order to happiness, that sinners should not only believe in God, but also in Jesus Christ, whom he has appointed to be the only mediator between him and offending man; who having satisfied his justice by his obedience and death, can powerfully plead for the salvation of all such as were under him, as a head for righteousness and life.

When Christ had eat the passover with his disciples, and had instituted the Lord's supper, as a memorial of his bloody death, being sensible that the sad and dismal hour was approaching, wherein he was to bear the weight of infinite wrath, and it would not be long before he was to be no more, as to his human nature, with his disciples in this world, he took care to fortify them against the terrifying ap-
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prehenensions of what was to come upon them; and he began his consolatory sermon with these words, "Let not your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me." The disciples were terrified with the prospect they had of the storms of persecution, which they knew would blow upon them, they were grieved at the thoughts of losing Christ's bodily presence, and they were not without their fears, lest they should lose his spiritual influence and assistance, when they came to be deprived of the presence of his human nature: In order to support their spirits, under the dejecting apprehensions of the aforesaid evils, their good Master directed them to believe in God the Father, and in himself, and not to separate him from the Father, or the Father from him, but to act faith on them both. They were in great consternation, and were plunged into a depth of sorrow, their spirits were depressed with many tormenting cares, and their souls were agitated with heart breaking fears; and the only remedy Christ prescribed to them, against the discomposed passions, which now tore their hearts, and the dread of future evils, which ruffled their thoughts, was to believe in God, as the foun-

^a Μὴ ταρασσέσθω ὑμεῖς ἢ καρδία· πιστεύετε εἰς Θεόν, καὶ εἰς ἐμὲ πιστεύετε. The word πιστεύετε both times may best be render'd imperatively, because there is scarce any place in scripture, where the same word, in the same proposition, should be rendered differently.

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dation of their trust, and to believe in himself, as the purchaser of their peace, and as one who engaged for their salvation: This was the way to keep their minds quiet and serene, in the midst of all their sorrows, and to prevent their thoughts from being like a disordered routed army, or like troubled waters, which swell and rage, and cast up miry foam.

When our blessed Lord joined himself with the Father, as the object of his disciples faith, he fully, in effect, declared himself to be above the rank of creatures, and to be equal with the Father in perfections; if he was not infinite in wisdom, power, truth and faithfulness, he could not equally be the object of faith with the Father, whom all allow to be really so; therefore from the Father and the Son being put on a level, when they are proposed to our faith, it appears that they are the same in power and glory.

To believe, includes many things in the sense of scripture, it signifies to acknowledge the reality of ^b a thing, to give ^c credit to any one's testimony, and to ^d receive the Christian doctrine; it also signifies to commit ^e an affair to the keeping of any one: and when it is

^b Πιστεύεις ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς ἔστι καλῶς ποιῶν καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πισεύουσι καὶ φρίσσουσιν. Jam. ii. 18.

^c Γύναι πιστεύσθι μοι. John iv. 21.

^d Πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ. Mark i. 15.

^e Αὐτοῖς ἐπισυνέδησαν τὰ λόγια τοῦ Θεοῦ. Rom. iii. 2.

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used with respect to our trusting in Christ, it takes in all these significations, and likewise comprehends the notion of our relying and resting on him; giving up ourselves entirely to him, and expecting all happiness from him. This is the meaning of believing, in a great number of texts of scripture, particularly in that which is under consideration.

In treating of faith, it is proper to begin with discoursing on the object of faith; but it may not be amiss to premise a general definition of saving faith; and the best definition that can be drawn from scripture is this; Faith is a grace wrought in the soul of a sinner, by the Holy Spirit, whereby being emptied of all opinionative thoughts of his own righteousness, strength and fulness, he is enabled to look to Christ, to betake himself to him as his only Saviour, to receive him, and to rest and rely upon him for the remission of his sins, for a righteousness to justify him in the sight of God, for strength to enable him to perform duty, to follow after holiness, and to encounter spiritual enemies; and for eternal life, when his work of faith and labour of love is ended, and he comes with joy to finish his course. This is the scripture notion of saving faith, and it has God for its fundamental and principal object, as he is a God of truth reconciled to sinners; but it has Christ for its immediate object, for it is only by his mediation that a sinner can come to God. Faith

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has for its immediate object the person of Christ, as he is God manifested in the flesh; and it has him for its object in his offices; as it justifies, it only trusts in him as a priest, but it at the same time receives him as a prophet, and submits to him as a king.

C H A P. I.

Of the principal and fundamental Object of Faith, which is God.

IT is certain from the light of nature, that there is a God, and that he is possessed of infinite perfections; the works of creation proclaim their great original, so that no one who traces the footsteps of wisdom and power, which are impressed on all things round him, can, without going contrary to his own reason, conclude there is no God. If we look upwards to the sun, the fountain of light and heat, and contemplate the regularity of the motion of the other heavenly bodies; if we cast our eyes about us, to the beautiful and gay variety which decks and enriches the earth, on which we tread; if we view the several tribes of living creatures, which move upon it or about it; if we think on the wonders of our own frame, and consider the exquisite mechanism of our bodies, and the nobler part of our constitution, the thinking intelligent

telligent substance, the rational soul which we carry about with us, we cannot but conclude, that there is a supreme Potentate, who made and who upholds ^f the heavens, the earth, and the seas, and all things therein, who gives to all life and breath, in whom we live, ^g move, and have our being, and who has not left himself without witness to the consciences of any, seeing by his bounty he sustains the sons of men, and fills their hearts with food and gladness; and we may cry out with the wise ^h king David, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse above shews his power and skill: there is no part where speech is used, but there the voice of his works is heard."ⁱ

That

^f Acts xiv. 15, 17. xvii. 25, 28.

^g Οὐδὲν περιφέρεις, τέλας, ἢ ἀγνοεῖς. δοκεῖς μὲ λῆγειν ὄργυραν τινὰ ἢ χρυσὸν ἔχειν, ἐν ταύτῳ φέρεται αὐτῷ. — αὐτῷ ὅτι παρόντων ἴσῳσιν, καὶ ἐφορῶντων καὶ ἐπακρόντων, ἢ αἰχμὴ ταῦτα ἐνθυμύμενοι καὶ ποιῶν, ἀνίσθηται τὸ αὐτοῦ φύσεως, καὶ διοχόληται. Arrianus Diff. Epictet. lib. II. c. 8. p. 188. Edit. Lond.

^h Psalm xix. 1, 3.

ⁱ Some Pagans have spoke much to the same sense, making allowance for their using sometimes the stile of Polytheism.

Νοῦν πάντα ἀλκοσμεῖν φᾶναι καὶ τὸ ὄψεσθαι τὸν κόσμον, καὶ ἡλίον, καὶ σελήνην καὶ ἄστρον, καὶ πάσης τῆς περιφορᾶς ἄξιον. Plato Phileb. Vol. II. p. 28. Ed. Stephan.

Καταβαλόμενοι ἐξ ὁρχῆς καινὴν νομοθεσίαν ἤρξατο περὶ τῶν ἐπερρανίων θεῶν. Εὐθύς γὰρ ἐν τῷ προαιμίῳ τῆς ὅλης νομοθεσίας ἔφη, δεῖν τὰς κατοικοῦντας ἐν τῇ πόλει, πάντων πρῶτον, ὑπολαβεῖν, καὶ πεπεισθαι θεὸς εἶναι, καὶ ταῖς ἀληθείαις ἐπισκοπεῖν τὸ ὑραῖον, καὶ τὴν ἀλκοσμῶσιν, καὶ ταῖς κρίναι τῆς τύχης, ὡς ἀνθρώπων εἶναι ταῦτα τὰ κατασκευάσματα. De Zaleuco Diodorus Siculus, lib. xii. p. 299. Ed. Steph. Vol. II. p. 84. Ed. Rhodom.

Quid potest esse tam apertum tamque perspicuum, quum coelum suspeximus, coelestiaque contemplati sumus, quam esse

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That there is a God is a truth which no rational creatures can disbelieve; indeed the royal ^k Psalmist has told us, that "The fool says in his heart, there is no God:" But this is rather to be understood of his wishing there was none, and of his sometimes being almost ready to think, things are as he wishes, than of his being fully persuaded there is no avenger of crimes; none have more need to wish there was no God than the devils, for none are filled with more hatred to God than those unhappy spirits; but to their cost they know there is a God, and ^lbelieving there is a God, they tremble at the apprehensions of fullness of torment. All refined nations have believed the existence of a God, and have acknowledged that there is a supreme power, who made the world, and upholds the things which he has made: An anonymous ^mold writer

esse aliquod numen praestantissimae mentis, quo haec reguntur: — Quod qui dubitat, haud sane intelligo, cur non idem, sol sit, an nullus sit, dubitare possit. Cicero de Nat. Deorum, lib. II. c. 2. Vol. IX. p. 2952. 2953. Ed. Wetstein. p. 111, 112. Ed. Davis.

○ *Esse praestantem aliquam aeternamque naturam, & eam suspiciendam adorandamque hominum generi, pulchritudo mundi, ordoque rerum coelestium cogit confiteri. Idem de Divinat. lib. II. c. 72. Vol. IX. p. 32, 55. al. p. 295.*

Quis est tam vecors, qui, quum in coelum suspexerit, Deos esse non sentiat, & ea quae tanta mente fiunt, ut vix quisquam arte ulla ordinem rerum ac vicissitudinem persequi possit, casu fieri possit. Idem Orat. de harusp. respons. cap. 9. Vol. III. p. 523. Ed. Graev. Vol. IV. p. 2323. Ed. Wetstein.

^k Psalm xiv. 1. liii. 1.

^l James ii. 19.

^m Αρχαῖοι μὲν εἰς τὸν λόγον καὶ πατέριός ἐστι πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις, ὡς

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writer has judiciously observed, that " It is an ancient opinion, and inbred with all men, that all things are from God, and are made by God for our use; for no created nature is sufficient for itself, being left destitute of preservation by the author of it." It has not been proved that any people have yet been found out, so over-run with ignorance and barbarism, as to have no notion of a power above them; tho' some nations, it must be owned, know little of him, and take up with gross conceptions about him. A wise ^apagan has observ'd, that tho' we may suppose a few persons to have been in the world, so ignorant and immoral as scarce to deserve the name of rational creatures, yet from such it may be known there is a God.

It must indeed be owned, that no greater proof can be given of the imperfection of natural reason, since the fall, than the unworthy representations some of the best wits of the heathen world gave of God, and the hideous and blemishing fictions they invented concerning him; tho' they knew him, in part, from his work, yet they glorified him not

ἐκ Θεοῦ τὰ πάντα, & Ἀλλ' Θεοῦ ἡμῖν συνέστηκεν. ἑδμήτριά ἢ φύσις αὐτῇ καθ' ἑαυτὴν ἀνταρκῆς, ἐρηνωθῆσα δ' ἐν τέττι ζωηρείας. Auctor de mundo cap. 11. in opp. Aristotelis.

^a Εἰ ἢ ἐξεγένοντο ἐν τῷ Συμπάντι αἰῶνι δύο πρὶν & τρεῖς ἄθεον & ταπεινὸν καὶ ἀναισθητὸς γένεσις, καὶ πεπλανημένοι ἢ ταῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς, ἐξηπατημένοι ἢ ταῖς ἀκοαῖς, ἐκτελιμημένοι ἢ τὴν ψυχὴν, ἄλογον καὶ ἄγονον καὶ ἀκαρπον, ὡς ἄδυμνον λίαν, ὡς βοῦς ἄκερ, ὡς ὄρνις ἀπτερος, καὶ ὡς αἰ τοῦτε ὅμως ἔχοντες πύσση τὸ θεῖον ἴσασιν ὅτι εἰσὶν ἐκόντες, καὶ λέγουσιν ἄκορτες. Maximus Tyrius. Diff. 1. p. 6. Ed. Davis.

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as God, but grew vain in their imaginations, and brought in a rabble of inferior Deities, whom they represented as not free from vicious passions, and acted so much beneath the dignity of human nature, as to bow down before stones and logs; they worshipped the creature besides the Creator, with subordinate worship, and so invented the irrational scheme of subordinate gods, and inferior worship, which has since been so much applauded for refined reason, by many of their foolish disciples, who call themselves Christians. However, several of the Pagans^o have spoke admirably

* It would run into too great length to quote all the passages of the ancient philosophers, which speak well of the supreme God; therefore with the reader's leave a few passages of the poets shall be produced, which occur at present.

Οι τε δια βροτοὶ ἄνδρες ὁμοῖς ἀφατοὶ τε φατοὶ τε
 Ρήτοί τ' ἀρήτοί τε, Διὸς μεγαλοῖο ἔκχρη.
 Ρῖα μ' ἤ βριάζει, ρῖα ἢ βριάζοντα χαλεπῇ
 Ρῖα δ' ἀεζήλον μινύθει, καὶ ἀδελον ἀέξει.
 Ρῖα ἢ τ' ἰδύσει σχολιὸν, καὶ ἀγνήορα κάρφει
 Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης, ὃς ἐπὶ ἔλκτα δάμναται ναίει.

Hesiod. oper. v. 2. &c.

Ζεὺς ἦν, Ζεὺς ἐστὶ, Ζεὺς ἔσται, ὦ μεγάλε Ζεῦ!

Phaennis Peleas apud Pausan. Phocic. c. 12. p. 128. Ed. Lips.

Οὐκ ἔστιν πιλάσσομαι ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἱφικτὸν
 Ημετέροις, ἢ χερσὶ λαβεῖν· ἥπερ τε μεγίστη
 Πιδοῦς ἀνδράποισιν ἀμαξιτὸς εἰς φρένα πίπτει.

Empedocles apud Clement. Alex. Strom. lib. v.
 c. 12. p. 694. Ed. Oxon.

Γνωμοσύνης δ' ἀφανὲς χαλεπώτατόν ἐστι νοῆσαι
 Μῆτρον δ' δὴ πάντων πύρατα μούνον ἔχει.

Solon apud eund. ibid.

Οὐδὲν ἐκφύγει τὸ θῆον, τοῦτο γιγνώσκειν σε δεῖ,
 Αὐτὸς ἔσθ' ἀμῶν ἐπὶ πῆλιν· ἀδυνατεῖ δ' οὐδὲν Θάος.

Epicharmus apud eund. ibid. c. 14. p. 708.

rably well concerning the supreme God, and have shewed, that tho' the light of nature, by

Πολλὰ μάλ' ὥς ἀγάνητον εἶν, καὶ ἀνάλεθρόν ἐστιν
Οὐλον, μυκηροβύς τε, καὶ ἀτρεμεὺς ἢ δ' ἀγάνητον.

Parmenides apud eund. ibid. p. 716.

Τὶ Θεός, ὅτι τὸ πᾶν.

Pindarus apud eund. ibid. 726. p. 492. Ed. Ox. Pind.

Θεὸς ὁ πάντας τεύχων βρότας.

Idem, ibid.

Θεῷ ἢ δυνατὸν ἐκ μελαίνης
Νυκτὸς ἀμύαντον ἄρσαι φάος,
Κελαινεφεῖ ἢ σκότῃ
Καλύψαι καθερὸν αἰμέρας σέλας.

Idem forsan apud eund. ibid. p. 708.

Ω Ζεῦ πατέρ παντελὲς πάντως.

Aeschyl. Sept. ad Theb. v. 120.

Χάριζε θνητῶν τ' Θεὸν, καὶ μὴ δόκη
Ομοιοιὺν αὐτῷ σάρκινον καθεστάναι
Οὐκ οἶσθα δ' αὐτόν ποτὲ μὲν ὥς πῦρ φαίνει)
Απλατῶ ὄρμη, ποτὲ δ' ὕδωρ, ποτὲ δὲ γνόφῳ
Καὶ θηροῖν αὐτὸς γίνεται παρεμφερὲς,
Ανέμῳ, νεφέλῃ τε καεραπῇ, βροντῇ, βροχῇ.
Υπερέτῃ δ' αὐτῷ θαλάσῃ καὶ πέτραι
Καὶ πᾶσα πηγὴ, καὶ ὕδατος (υψηλῶτα
Τρέμῃ δ' ὄρη καὶ γαῖα καὶ πελώριον
Βυθὸς θαλάσσης, καὶ ὄρειν ὕψος μέγα,
Ἐπὶ ἐπιβλέψῃ γοργὸν ὄρμηά δημοτότε
Πάντα· δυνατὴ γὰρ δόξα ὑψιστοῦ Θεοῦ.

Idem apud Justin. de Monarch. p. 152. &c. Ed. Oxon.

Clem. Al. Strom. lib. v. c. 14. p. 727, 728. Fragment.

p. 647. Ed. Stanl.

Εἰς ταῖς ἀληθείαισιν εἰς εἶν Θεός
Ὅς ἔρανον τ' ἐτάρχε καὶ γαῖαν μακρὴν,
Πόντε τε χαροπὸν οἶδμα, κένεμον βίαν.
Θητοὶ ἢ πόλλοι καρδίαν πλανώμενοι,
Ἰδρυσάμεισθα πημάτων παραφυγῇ,
Θεῶν ἀζάλματ' ἐκ λίθων ἢ χαλκίων,
Ἡ χρυσοτέκτων, ἢ ἄφαντινον τόπας·
Θυσίας τε τούτοις καὶ καλὰς πατηγύρεις
Σπίφονταί· ὅπως εὐσεβεῖν νομίζομεν.

Sophocles apud Justin. Cohort. ad Graec. c. 17. p. 83.

De Monarch. c. 3. p. 154, &c. Clem. Al. Cohor. ad

Gent. c. 7. p. 63. Strom. lib. v. c. 14. p. 717.

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by which men have some notion of God,
is much eclipsed by the darkness intro-
duced

Σὺ τ' αὐτοφυῆ, τ' ἐν αἰθερίῳ
Ρόμβῳ πάντων φύσιν ἐμπλέξανθ',
Οἱ ποῦ μ' ἦ φῶς, περὶ δ' ὀρφναῖα
Νυξ ἀιολόχρως, ἀκρίτος τ' ἄσρων
Οὐλ' ἐνδελιχῶς ἀμφιχυρεῖται.

Euripides apud Clem. Al. ibid. p. 717.

Δῖται γὰρ ὁ Θεός, ἑπὶ ἐς ὄντως Θεός
Ουδένος.

Idem Hercul. Furent. v. 1345.

Ορῶς τ' ὕψος τ' δ' ἀπερὸν αἰθέρα,
Καὶ γῆν περὶ ἔχονθ' ὑγραῖς ἐν ἀγκάλαις,
Τούτοις νόμιζε Ζῆνα τ' δ' ἡγεῖν Θεόν.

Idem Fragment. Vol. 11. p. 504. Ed. Barnes.

Ζεὺς πρῶτ' ἔγεντο, Ζεὺς ὕστατ' ὀρχικέραν
Ζεὺς κίφαλη, Ζεὺς μίσσα, Διὸς δ' ἐκ πάντα τεύχεται,
Ζεὺς βασιλεύς· Ζεὺς αὐτὸς ἀπάντων ὀρχιγνέδλ'·
Ἐν κράτος, εἰς Δαῖμων ἦλθετο, μέγας ἄρχος ἀπάντων.

Auctor Orphic. apud Proclum in Timaeum, p. 95.

Κικλήσκω μέγαν ἄγνον ἐρισμάραγον, περιφαιτον,
Αἰετοί, φλογοῖντα, πυρίδραμον, ἀεροφίγῃ,
Ἀστράπλοντα σίλας νίφειν παραγοδρόμῳ αὐδῇ,
Φρικάδῃ, Βαρύμῃν, ἀνίκητον Διὸν ἄγνον,
Ἀστραπία Δία, παυγενίτῃ, βασιλῇ μίγιστον,
Εὐμδρόντα φέρειν γλυκερὰν βιότοις τελευτήν.

Hymn. Orphic. xix. p. 118. Ed. Ultraj.

Εἰς Θεὸς ἔν τε Διοῖσι καὶ ἀνδραποῖσι μίγιστος·
Οὐ τι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοῖος, ὡδὲ νοῦμα.

Xenophanes apud Clement. Al. Strom. lib. v. c. 14. p. 714.

Διότι τ' ὄντα κύριοι πάντων αἰεῖ,
Καὶ πατέρα τούτων Διὸς τέλος τιμᾷ μόνον,
Ἀγαθῶν τασούτων εὐρετὴν καὶ κτίστορα.

Menander apud Justin. de Monarch. c. 4. p. 172.

Θεὸν δὲ ποῖον, εἰπὶ μοι νομίζον
Τὸν πάντ' ὁρῶντα, καὐτὸν εὐχ' ὀρώμενον.

Philemon apud eund. ibid. c. 3. p. 155.

Θεὸς ὁ πάντων δισπότης, ὃ τ' ἐνομα
Φοβερώτερόν ἐστιν, οὐδ' αἶν ὀνομάσαιμι ἐγώ.

Diphilus apud Clem. Al. Strom. lib. v. c. 14. p. 721.

Εἰ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἰρωτᾶς μ' οἶον ἔστι, ἄκχε δὴ
Τεταγμένον, δίκαιον, ἕσιον, ἐυσέβες,

duced by the fall, yet it is not quite extinguished; and the imperfect things they say of the

Κρατοῦν ἑαυτοῦ, χρήσιμον, καλόν, δέον,
 Αὐστηρόν, αὐτέκασον, αἰεὶ συμφέρον,
 Αφοβόν, ἄλυπον, λυσitteλές, ἀνώδιον,
 Ωφέλιμον, εὐάρεστον, ἀσφαλές, φίλον,
 Εὐτιμον, ὁμολογούμερον, εὐκλεές
 Ατυφόν, ἐπιμελές, πρᾶον, σφοδρόν,
 Χρονίζόμερον, ἀμειψίον, αἰεὶ ἀγαθόν.

Cleanthes apud eund. Cohort. ad Gr. c. 6. p. 61, 61.

Κύδις ἁνάντων, πολύνυμμε παγκρατὲς αἰεὶ,
 Ζεὺς φύσεως ὄρχήγη, νόμος μὲν πάντα κυβερνῶν,
 Χαῖρε. Σὲ γὰρ πᾶσι θεῖμις θνητοῖσι προσαυδᾷ.
 Εκ σοῦ γὰρ γένος ἐσμὲν, ἤχῃ μιμήματ' λαχόντες
 Μοῦνον, ὅσα ζῶει τε καὶ ἔρπει θνητ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν.
 Τῷ σε καθυμνήσω καὶ σὸν κράτος αἰὲν αἰίσω.
 Σοὶ ἢ πᾶς ὁδε πόσμος ἐλισσόμενος παρὶ γαῖαν
 Πείθεται, ἥκεν ἀγῆς, καὶ ἐκὼν ὑπὸ σεῖο κρατεῖται.
 Τοῖον ἔχεις ὑπεργόνον ἀνίκητοις ὑπὸ χερσίν
 Ἀμφήκη πυρόντα, αἰεζώοντα κεραυνόν.
 Τοῦ γὰρ ὑπὸ πλήγῃς φύσεως πάντ' ἐρρίγασι,
 Ω σὺ κατευθύνεις κοινὸν λόγον, ὃς ἀγαθὸν πάντων
 Φοιτᾷ μεγνύμενος.
 Ος τόσος γεγάως ὑπάτος βασιλεὺς ἀγαθὸν παντός.
 Οὐδὲ τί γίγνεται ἔργον ἐπὶ χθονὶ σοῦ δίχα δαίμων,
 Οὔτε κατ' αἰθέριον θεῖον πόλον, ἔτ' ἐπὶ πόντῳ,
 Πλὴν ὅποσα ῥέζῃσι κακοὶ σφετέρῃσιν ἀνοαίς.
 Καὶ κοσμοῖς τὰ ἄκοσμα καὶ οὐ φίλα σοὶ φίλα ἔσιν.
 Ω ἢ γὰρ εἰς ἐν πάντα συνήνεμοκας ἐδὴ κακοῖσιν,
 Ωςθ' ἕνα γίνεσθαι πάντων λόγον αἰὲν ἱόντων.
 Οἱ φεύγοντες εἰδὼσιν ὅσοι θνητῶν κακοὶ εἰσιν
 Δύσμοροι ὅτ' ἀγαθῶν μὲν αἰεὶ κτῆσιν ποθέοντες,
 Οὐτ' ἐσποῶσι Θεοῦ κοινὸν νόμον, οὔτε κλύουσιν.
 Ω κεν πεπιδόμενοι σὺν νῶν βίον ἐσθλὸν ἔχουσιν
 Αὐτοὶ δ' αὖ ὁρμῶσιν ἀνευ καλοῦ ἄλλος ἐπ' ἄλλα
 Οἱ μὲν ὑπὲρ δόξης ἀσπιδὶ δυσέριστον ἔχοντες,
 Οἱ δὲ ἐπὶ κερδοσύνας τετραμμένοι ὑδενὶ κόσμῳ,
 Ἄλλοι δ' εἰς ἀνεσιν, καὶ ζώματ' ἡδέα ἔργα,
 Ἄλλα Ζεὺς πάνδωρε, κελαινεφές, ὄρχικέραυνε,
 Ἀνθρώπους ῥύς ἀπειροσύνης ἀπὸ λυγρῆς,
 Ἦν σὺ πάτερ σκέδασον ψυχῆς ἀπὸ, δὲς ἢ κυρσάς
 Γνώμης ἢ πίσυρος σὺ δίκης μὲν πάντα κυβερνᾷς.
 Οφρ' ἂν τιμηθέντες ἀμειβώμεθα σε τιμῇ,
 Ὑμνῶντες τὰ σὰ ἔργα δίκαια, ὡς ἐπέοικε

Θνητῶν

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the Supreme, carry such high ideas in them,
that they may put to the blush such as, enjoy-
ing

Θηταὶ ἴοντα· ἵπαι ὅτε βροτοῖς γέρας ἄλλοτε μεῖζον,
Οὔτε Θείοις, ἢ κοινὸν αἰεὶ νόμος ἐν δίκῃ ὑμνεῖν.

Ejusdem Hymnus in summum Deum, edit. ab H. Ste-
phano, Poet. Philos. p. 49.

Ἐκ Διὸς ὄρχόμεθα, τ' ἐδέχοντο ἄνδρες ἰῶμεν
Ἀρρητον· μετὰ δ' ἱ Διὸς πᾶσαι μ' ἀγυαί,
Πᾶσαι δ' ἀνθρώπων ἀγοραί· μετὰ δὲ θάλασσα,
Καὶ λιμένες· πάντα δὲ Διὸς κεχρήμεθα πάντες·
Τῷ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν· ὃ δ' ἥπιος ἀνθρώποισι
Δεξιὰ σημαίνει· λαὸς δ' ἐπὶ ἔργον ἐγείρει
Μιμνήσκων βιοτοῖο· λέγει δ' ὅτε βῆλος ὄρεσιν
Βασί τε καὶ μακέλησι, λέγει δ' ὅτε δεξιὰ ὦραι,
Καὶ φυτὰ γυρῶσαι, καὶ σπέρματα πάντα βαλεῖξ.
Αὐτὸς γὰρ πᾶγι σήματ' ἐν ἐρανῷ ἐτήριζεν
Ἄστρα Δι' αἰθέρας· ἐσκέψατο δ' εἰς ἑναιὸν
Ἀσέρας, οἳ καὶ μάλιστα τετυγμένα σημαίνουσι
Ἀνδράσιν ὠράων, ὃ φρ' ἔμπιδα πάντα φύονται.
Τῷ μιν αἰεὶ πρῶτον τε καὶ ὕστατον ἰλάσκειν.
Χαῖρε Πάτερ μέγα θαῦμα, μέγ' ἀνθρώποισιν ὄνειαρ.

Aratus, Phaenomen. v. 1. — 15. Vid. Theon. in loc.
p. 1, 2, 3. Edit. Oxon.

— — — — — Εἰ Θεὸν αἶσθαι,
Ἰσθ' ὅτι καὶ εἶναι Δαίμονι πᾶν δύνατον.

Callimachus apud Plutarch. De Placit. Philos. lib. 1.
c. 7. p. 880. Ed. Francf. N^o 137. Fragm. Bentleii,
Ed. Graev. p. 372.

Jupiter, qui genus colis aliisque hominum, per quem vivi-
mus vitalem aevum, quem penes spes vitae sunt hominum
omnium, da diem hunc fospitem, quaeso, rebus meis agundis.

Plautus Poeno, Act. V. Sc. 4. v. 14, &c. p. 843. Ed. Gronov.
— — — — — Jovis omnia plena.

Virgil. Ecl. iii. 60.

— — — — — Deum namque ire per omnes
Terrasque, tractusque, maris coelumque profundum;
Hinc pecudes, armenta, viros, genus omne ferarum,
Quemque sibi tenuis nascentem arcessere vitas.

Idem Georgic. iv. 221, &c.

Principio coelum ac terras, camposque liquentis,
Lucentemque globum lunae, Titaniaque astra
Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus
Mens agitat molem, & magno se corpore miscet.

Inde

ing better sight, have the confidence to say, that our notion of God is only a relative notion founded on dominion.

There can be no saving faith without believing there is a God. The apostle ^p Paul, after he had told us, that "without faith it is impossible to please God," has taken care

Inde hominum pecudumque genus, vitaeque volantum,
Et quae marmoreo fert monstra per aequora tellus.

Idem Aeneid. VI. 724, &c. vide Servium, Vol. II.
p. 1085. Edit. Masvic. prior. p. 784. Ed. ult.

— — O qui res hominumque Deumque
Aeternis regis imperiis, & fulmine terres.

Idem ibid. I. 229.

O pater, O hominum Divumque aeterna potestas.

Idem ibid. X. 18.

Quid prius dicam solitis parentis
Laudibus? Qui res hominum & Deorum
Qui mare & terras, variisque mundum
Temperat horis.

Unde nil majus generatur ipso
Nec viget quicquam simile aut secundum.

Horatius, Ode I. xii. 13, &c.

Qui terram inertem, qui mare temperat
Ventosum & urbis, regnaque tristia:
Divosque, mortalesque turmas
Imperio regit unus aequo.

Idem, Od. III. iv. 46, &c.

Namque canam tacita naturam mente potentem,
Infusumque Deum Coelo, Terrisque, Fretoque
Ingentem aequali moderantem foedere molem
Totumque alterno consensu vivere mundum,
Et rationis agi motu; cum spiritus unus
Per cunctas habitet partes, atque irriget orbem,
Omnia pervolitans, corpusque animale figuret.

Manilius lib. II.

Hoc opus immensi constructum corpore mundi
Vis animae divinae regit, sacroque meatu,
Conspirat Deus, & tacita ratione gubernat.

Idem ibid.

^p Heb. xi. 6.

to assure us, that " whoever comes to him, must believe that he is." In order to believe rightly that God is, there must be more than a bare assent of the mind to the truth of God's existence, seeing this is to be found in devils and reprobates; the whole heart must be drawn out and united to God by faith; we must believe in God, our souls with confidence must rest upon him, as the supreme and all-sufficient good, and our satisfactory and eternal portion; we must fear him as the greatest being, and must embrace him as the most amiable object of our love; when we believe in God we must acknowledge his supremacy over us, and his property in us, as we are the works of his hands: we must rely on his all-sufficiency, we must depend on his power, we must submit to his wisdom, we must assent to his truth and faithfulness, we must revere his justice, righteousness, and holiness, and we must admire and adore his mercy, goodness, and truth.

Christians, who enjoy the scripture revelation, find it fully and amply there declared, that there is one God, of infinite perfections, and no more, but that in the unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of the same substance, dignity, and perfections, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; these three divine persons then, taken in the complex, may be said to be the principal and fundamental object of faith; and we can never believe

believe in one divine person aright, but we must at the same time believe in the other two. According to the agreement made between these divine persons, of the reason of which we are not proper judges, in the œconomy of salvation, the Father, the first person of the sacred Trinity, sustains the character of the supreme lawgiver and judge of offending man, the Son has undertaken the work of a mediator, to reconcile sinners to him, and the Spirit is employed in making them fit to see and enjoy him; therefore as the Father is supreme in office, and as the Son and the Spirit, tho' equal to him in supremacy of nature, are subordinate in office, we must, in the way of believing, come to the Father thro' the Son, and by the Spirit; on this account God the Father may, in a peculiar and eminent manner, be stiled the principal and fundamental object of faith.

When sinners are brought to believe, it is God the Father who first presents himself to their faith, as he is the God of ^a truth; the goodness of God engages our love, and his power is the support of our hope, but this is after we have looked to his truth; for faith first looks to the truth and faithfulness of God, who is not a man, that he should be deceived, nor the son of man that he should be mistaken.

^a Πεισθόμεν ἢ τῷ μόνῳ Θεῷ· ὃν γινώσκουμεν ὅτι οὐ παραβήσε)
τὰ καλῶς ἡμῶν ἐπηγγελμένα. Clem. Alex. Strom. II. c. 6. p. 444.
Ed. Oxon.

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Faith believes the promise of God; but it is not simply the promise, but God, whose truth is expressed in the promise, who is the foundation of faith; for it is for God's sake, and because of his veracity, that the promise is believed: We must believe in the true and faithful God, who stands ready to be reconciled to us, and then we shall never stagger at believing the declaration he has made of his good-will and pleasure to us, in and thro' Christ: The Psalmist had a good notion of this, as appears from the following words, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and I hope in his word"; waiting on God first sprung up in his soul, or he first waited on God for the pardon of his sins, and then he could hope in his word, wherein he declared his gracious purposes, and merciful intentions. As there can be no faith in God without a promise, so when the promise is presented, it is the truth of God in the promise, and not the promise itself, on which faith is fundamentally and principally acted. We cannot believe any thing concerning God, in the point of our salvation, if we do not first believe his truth; for how can we be refreshed with a sense of his good will toward us, without knowing him to be true? How can we expect he will pardon our sins, if we do not depend on his faithfulness? And how can we hope he

¹ Psalm cxxx. 5.

will save us, if we do not believe that his veracity engages him to fulfill every gracious promise, which has gone out of his mouth? As faith ultimately centers in God, as the perfection of all goodness and happiness, so it principally eyes God, as he is the true and faithful God, in the promises of reconciliation. God is unchangeable in his truth and faithfulness, therefore faith has a sure foundation to go upon; for as he is such, he will never fail the hope of any who trust in him; the heavens may pass away, and the strong foundations of the earth may be overturned, but his salvation shall be for ever, and his righteousness shall never be abolished; his word shall stand, tho' the ancient mountains may depart; and his promises shall be made good, tho' the lasting hills may bow.

If we consider God as a God of unchangeable truth and faithfulness, we cannot but see the highest reason to put our trust in him, for he will never break his word; and we may repose ourselves upon him, when we are called to encounter the greatest difficulties, because as his faithfulness will never fail, so his almighty power can never be overmatch'd by any obstacles, tho' what we are called to grapple with may be far too difficult for flesh and blood to engage. It is a blemish and dishonour to our reason, when we distrust a God of infinite truth and power; and it shews how our understanding is impaired by the fall,

B 3

and

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and how prone we are to conceive of God, as one like ourselves : When we rely on God's truth, and take encouragement from his power, we act according to the dictates of the highest reason, and we shall find that the God, in whose hands we repose our concerns, will not fail our hopes, but will cause all things to work together for our good ; he will never leave us nor forsake us, but will satisfy us with his favour here, and will hereafter shew us his salvation.

If we search the rolls of sacred antiquity, as we shall find, in those venerable records, eminent instances of faith in God, so we shall see that God never fail'd the confidence of such as trusted in him, but highly honoured the grace of faith, by which the elders^f, or the ancient Saints, obtained a good report. Abel, the first pious person who was born of a woman, had a fiducial regard to God, as a God of truth ; he credited his promise of a Messiah to come, and offered up a bloody sacrifice, as a type prefiguring his death, and God was 'pleased with his offering. Enoch, in a profane and ungodly age, walked with God in a way of believing, and warned^u the careless sinners of his day of a future judgment, and God translated him in body as well as soul to heaven, that he should not see death. Noah,

^f Heb. xi. 2.

^f Gen. iv. 4.

Heb. xi. 4.

^u Gen.

v. 22, 24. Heb. xi. 5. Jude i 4, 15.

Part I. OF SAVING FAITH. 23

in an age^w when all flesh had corrupted their ways, and when the wickedness of persons of all ages and both sexes was grown intolerable, acted faith on God; he, in zeal for the honour of his Maker's name, boldly reprov'd the giants in sin who were his contemporaries, and who had fill'd the earth with rapine, violence and confusion; he faithfully preached righteousness and repentance to them, as to souls shut up in the prison of sin, and bound over to future punishment; and tho' in vain, yet he constantly, for above a hundred years, warn'd them of the flood which was coming; this his work of faith and labour of love was so acceptable to God, that when the windows of heaven were opened, and the springs of the deep were broke up, to sweep away the wicked race of men, and when, in all probability, the whole globe of the earth was dissolv'd, he prepared an ark, to save this preacher of righteousness and his family, which rode safe in the midst of the tempestuous waves of the great abyss, 'till it pleas'd God to cause the waters, which had cover'd this world as a garment, and stood above the mountains, at his rebuke, and at the voice of his thunder, to haste away, and to renew the wrinkled face of the earth. Abraham believ'd in *God even against hope, and it pleas'd God to give

^w Gen. vi. vii. Heb. xi. 7. 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. 2 Pet. ii. 5.
^{*} Gen. xv. 4, 5, 6. xvii. 1—19. xxii. Rom. iv. 16—22.
 Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19.

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him a son in his old age; nay his faith was so strong, that at God's command he was ready to sacrifice his son, being fully persuaded, he who bestowed him upon him would raise him from the dead; and as a testimony of his Maker's approbation, he received the fullest assurance, that in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, because the Saviour of the world was to spring from that son, whom he withheld not from God. Joseph in his early years cast himself on the care of the God of his fathers, and chose rather a noisome prison than to commit secret wickedness against him; and that God whom he thus honoured, brought him from his confinement, and made him lord of the whole land of Egypt. Moses acted affiance on God, and seeing by faith him who is invisible to sense, he chose rather to suffer affliction with his people, than to possess the treasures of Egypt; when he had taken this noble resolution, God did not forsake him, but made use of him as his instrument, to terrify Pharaoh and Egypt with signs and mighty wonders, and to cause the waves of the Red sea to retire, that Israel might pass, and to return, to drown the Egyptians; and he thought fit to make choice of him to receive the law from him, and condescended to converse with him as a friend, amidst all the dreadful thunders and lightnings of mount Sinai. Joshua trusted in God, and was honoured by him to lead

Israel into the possession of Canaan, and to destroy the many potent nations who inhabited it: Before him, at the ^y sound of trumpets of rams-horns, the walls of Jericho fell flat; at ^z the shaking of his spear kingdoms were destroyed; and at his ^a word the sun stood still, and the moon was arrested in her course. Gideon relied on God, ^b as able to save Israel, without human might and power, and he enabled him, by the means of a few trumpets, lamps and pitchers, to discomfit a hostile army, which resembled the grains of sand on the sea-shore for multitude. Jephtha depended on God, and ^c kept up a close communion with him, and tho' he had been despised and banished by his countrymen, God called him from his obscure retreat, to deliver those who set no value upon him. Sampson committed himself to God, and ^d was by him strengthen'd to lay heaps dead on heaps of his insulting foes, with no other weapon than the jaw-bone of an ass, and when ready to die for thirst, was miraculously relieved by water flowing out of the same bone; when he was, as the just punishment of his folly, given into the hands of his enemies, and used by them as an object of contempt, on his application to ^e that God who chastened him, he was enabled to destroy more than he had ever done

^y Josh. vi. 20, 21. ^z viii. 18—29. ^a x. 12, 13, 14.

^c Judges vii. 7, 9, 15—22. ^d xi. 11, 24, 27, 32, 33.

^e xv. 14—20. ^f xvi. 21, 25, 28, 29, 30.

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at once, and to fall^f with honour among multitudes of those who mocked him; thus he was glorious in his death, dropping in the cause of religion, liberty, and his country. Samuel could^g with a holy boldness appeal to God, not doubting but he whom he had sincerely served would appear in defence of his innocence, and so it proved, for his good master openly^h testified his approbation of his faithful

^f Here fancy may easily furnish us with a very amazing view of a great hero, famed for matchless achievements, deprived of sight, patiently, for a while suffering all manner of hostile scorn from a drunken rabble, but presently we may see him lifting up his head to heaven, with a holy ardor and triumph, the certain presage of a victory; and then pulling down the pillars, and burying the enemies of his God and his country under the ruins of the palace, from the windows of which they had expressed their contempt of him, as a blind helpless captive.

^g 1 Sam. xii. 3, 4, 16—19.

^h Might we give the least scope to imagination, we might form in our minds a picture, which might raise variety of passions; we might view a giddy hair-brain'd multitude, sick of their liberties, and longing to be slaves, demanding a king, with resolution in their looks, and eager transport in their eyes; we might see the venerable high-priest, prophet, and prince, who was grown hoary grey in their service, and who had for many years guided them in the integrity of his heart, and the skillfulness of his hands, standing at the altar with trouble in his face, because contempt was cast unjustly on him; and yet because he was conscious of his honesty, with a noble air of innocence and intrepidity, lifting up his hands on high, and appealing to heaven, as if he said, "Whose ox or ass have I took? Whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whom have I received a bribe, to blind me in executing judgment?" We might behold those who treated him before with sauciness, now, with shame in their countenances, by loud acclamations testifying to his honesty; and from another part we might see the heavens louring,
and

ful service. David placed his confidence in God, and he never forsook the man after his own heart; he¹ called him from following the flock, to strike down at one blow the insolent defyer of his hosts, whose words made the whole army of ^kIsrael shake; he protected him, and caused him to hope in his faithfulness, when¹ he wandered about in forests and deserts, without a home, and in his^m greatest difficulties, he left him not without secret supports; and at last, according to his promise, brought him from a state of banishment, to rule his people Israel, crowned his sword with

and God answering the appeal of his righteous servant, by a storm of rain, and a loud clap of thunder, at a time when it was least expected; and the unruly people by this struck with terror, and begging the reverend father of his country, of whom the most High testified his approbation, to pray for them.

ⁱ 1 Sam. xvii. 37, 45—51.

^k Could we suppose ourselves placed within the scene of this action, it must be certainly very great to see a hardy champion, surpassing the common size of men, with defiance louring on his brow, shaking his spear, and mocking the whole host of Israel, whilst no less heroes than Saul, Jonathan, and Abner stood aghast at his menaces, and shook at the terror of his frown: On the other side, it must be marvellous and surprising to see a youthful shepherd, fresh in beauty's bloom, with a maiden blush over-spreading his cheeks, yet with an heroic fire, and a generous scorn sparkling in his eyes, running unarm'd, with eager speed, to meet the enormous boaster, from whose looks a brave host retired, without concern slinging a stone, and in a moment laying him gasping at his feet, and with a juvenile exultation bestriding his corps, drawing his own sword, flourishing it over him, and with it striking off his head.

¹ 1 Sam. xx. 14—17. xxiii. 17, 18. xxiv. 20. xxvi. 10.
² xxx. 6.

almost

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almost continual conquest, and extended his sway over all the neighbouring nations; when this noble hero was grown old in honour, when ^a he was grey-headed, and his strength failed, that God, who had been the guide of his youth, forsook him not, but helped him to shew his power to the ages to come, by going off the stage of the world in triumph ^o and holy rapture, on account of his having made with him an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, wherein the most ample provision was made for his salvation, and wherein was all his desire. Elijah encouraged himself ^p in God, and was not afraid, being zealous for the Lord of hosts, to oppose an insolent idolatrous prince; and when he had finished the course of his ministry on earth, in a chariot of fire, with angels for his guards, he was carried up by a whirlwind into heaven, without tasting the bitter waters of death. The three noble ^q Jews, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, despised the terror of Nebuchadnezzar's frown, and leaving themselves in God's hand, with a generous defiance of the haughty tyrant's threats, chose rather to be cast into a burning fiery furnace, than fall down before an idol, not without hopes, that the God of heaven would witness to his own cause, in delivering them

^a Psalm lxxi. 9, 15—18. ^o 2 Sam. xxiii. 1—5.

^p 1 Kings xviii. 17, 40. xix. 13. xxi. 17-24. 2 Kings ii. 11. ^q Dan. iii. 13—30.

from

from the flames; who accordingly sent his angel to preserve them from the heat of the fire, which amazing deliverance so struck the king, that he blessed their God, and loaded them with honour. Daniel,^r whilst a young captive, purposed in his heart not to offend against the law of his God, and he was soon advanced to the highest temporal preferments; when long after, by a flight of his enemies, he was brought to this dilemma, either to forbear praying to God, or to ^r be cast into the lion's den, he, without seeking the darkness of a private retreat, worshipped his Maker against the unrighteous law, and not doubting of God's ability to deliver him, exposed himself to the jaws and fangs of the ravenous beasts; and his confidence was not in vain, for an angel stop'd the mouths of the growling savages, and he rose out of the den, possess'd of greater earthly glory than he ever had before. This wise and great saint was one of the happy few, to whom outward prosperity did no harm, and so was one whom God delighted to honour; for under ^r all the revolutions in the kingdom of Babylon, he kept his reputation, being a principal favourite of, at least, four powerful kings, and at last prime minister of state, in the greatest empire that then was in the world; and being faithful, and without error and fault, he was more esteemed for his

^r Dan. i. 8. ii. 48.
2, 3, 28.

^r Ibid. c. vi.

^r Ibid. v. 29. vi.

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wisdom and excellent spirit, than for the purple robes which he wore, or the chains of gold with which he was decked : He besides lived to see his countrymen return from captivity ; to him it was revealed when the Messiah should come, more clearly than to any other prophet ; and at last he came to his grave in a full age, as a shock of corn is gathered in its season ; God satisfied him with long life, and then shewed him his salvation, and brought him to rest in peace, and to stand in his lot among the righteous, at the end of his days.

We ought to remember the heroes gone before us, and to follow their faith, considering the end of their conversation ; indeed it is not in the least likely, that we should be called to the important and hard service, in which they were engaged ; but as we shall more or less be involved in difficulties, being compassed with such a cloud of witnesses, we should call to mind their labours, and the glorious end which awaited them, not doubting but the same God in whom they trusted, will enable us to encounter those less obstructions, which we may meet with, if we commit ourselves to him ; for the Lord of hosts is still the sun and shield of his people, and blessed are all they who trust in him.

There are scarce any Christians, who have not at one time or another experienced the power, goodness and faithfulness of their God, in delivering them either from trouble,
or

or out of distress; therefore when they are involved in fresh difficulties, they should call to mind former experiences of God's mercy towards them, and from thence should take encouragement to cast themselves on the care and faithfulness of the most High, for support under their new burdens. What reason have any to doubt of God's willingness to succour them, who have formerly experienced his readiness to relieve them? Is his hand shortened, that it cannot work out the same salvation it has before? or is his ear heavy, that he cannot again hear the sighing of the prisoners? is it possible for his power to be lessened? or for his bowels of mercy to be streighten'd? Can he who is faithful and true, who has promised that all things shall work together for the good of them that love him, break his word? Can the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning, change his purpose, or alter his intention? God has been the help of his people in ages past, and he is fit to be their hope for years to come; and it is the great blemish of such as have experienced him to be a sheltering screen from the stormy blast of trouble, to distrust his help under any fresh gusts of tribulation, which may blow upon them; so that whatever the afflictions of a believer may be, he ought to consider and call to mind what tastes he has had of the care of the great preserver of men, when he has, at other times, been

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been plunged in sorrow; and the remembrance of former deliverances should keep him from distrusting his God any more, and should make him call upon all within him, in the words of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, which he uttered when the waves and billows of distress went over him, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." If we cherish such a temper as this in ourselves, we may hope that he who has saved us from dangers many, and troubles sore, will still deliver us; and we may expect that he will cause light to break forth to us in our obscurity, and will turn the scaring shadows of our dark night of affliction, into a clear and serene morning, without clouds or rain.

When we stir up ourselves to believe in God, we ought to banish from ourselves all low mean notions of him; some have taken such a liberty with the wonderful God, as to stile him a good-humour'd and a good-natur'd Being; and who knows, as our age grows more polite, but that we may hear him called a cheerful and a merry Being? certainly such low, nay such profane stuff is to be despised by us, and we ought to pity the folly, and hate the arrogance which ignorant creatures shew, when they talk at this wild and ludicrous rate, as if the

* Psalm xlii. 11.

infinite

infinite and tremendous Potentate of heaven and earth, who upholds and orders all things, were such a mean and imperfect being as themselves, when before him all the nations of the earth are but as a drop in the bucket, and the small dust of the balance; and when in comparison of him all creatures are as nothing, nay less than nothing, and vanity. It ought to raise indignation in every generous breast, to see the contemptible reptiles of the earth making so free with that glorious King, to whose footstool the mighty angels approach with humble prostration, and before whose awful presence the most powerful spirits of the celestial world veil their faces.

It is a very low notion some give us of God, when they say, it is a relative term expressing dominion, and not denoting a substance invested with infinite perfections; but tho' we ought always to include in our notion of God his being the Author and Governor of the universe, yet he can never be a fit object of our hope and trust, if we do not conceive of him as a sovereign, eternal, unchangeable, all-seeing, omnipresent, and almighty Potentate; as such, he can command us into being, and can take care of us, and preserve us in being, and as such, he is a worthy object of our faith, hope, dependence, and worship; whereas if we were to conceive of him only as our Author and Governor, without considering his essential perfections, our faith and hope must needs

be weakened, and we should be perplexed in all our approaches to him. The Scripture notion of God is of a Being of all possible excellence, and in the oracles of truth he appeals to his infinite perfections; but the fancy that God is only a relative term expressing dominion, is an idle figment of conceited mortals, who choose rather to take up with vain philosophy, and to amuse themselves with science falsely so called, than make the idol of their imperfect reason stoop before the wisdom of revelation.

In order to trust in God aright, we should not fix the eye of our faith on any single attribute, but should contemplate all his perfections; the separating one attribute of God from another, and considering it abstractedly, has been the cause of many great mistakes; some have principally ruminated on God's absolute sovereignty, and from thence have been led (unwarily) to conclude, that he could have pardon'd sin without satisfaction, and that he may punish an innocent creature with eternal torments; but it can scarce be imagined, that men of reason would have fallen into such crude absurdities, had they always kept it in their thoughts, that tho' God is absolutely sovereign, yet he is infinitely wise, faithful, holy, just, good, and merciful; others have chiefly conceived of God as a God of rich and free mercy, and from thence have incautiously drawn such odd conclusions as these, that
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he takes delight in his elect, tho' in a state of sin, that he sees no sin in his people, and that they are free from all obligations to the moral law; but no persons, in their senses, would run into such dangerous extremes, if they did but consider, that the God of all mercy and grace is an infinitely holy and pure Being, who can never take pleasure in what is contrary to his very nature. There is a different sort of men, who pretend to be wholly swallowed up in the admiration of God's mercy, and so would extend it to such as know not Christ, and are wholly ignorant of the gospel of grace; but these bold intruders into things which they have not seen, foolishly make the mercy and goodness of God clash with his sovereignty, justice, holiness, and faithfulness, we must never think it any excuse for our falling into errors, to pretend, that we aim at the exalting of this or that single perfection of God; as it is the design of the most High to glorify not one, but all his attributes, so we must not dare to set one at variance with another, lest when we have spent our pains to exalt one, to the obscuring of others, we have him to say, Who has required this at your hands? If we continually bear in mind, that all the attributes of God act in a constant harmony, we shall be enabled to steer an even course, and when we eagerly endeavour to shun one extreme, we shall not injudiciously run into another.

We must not presume to trust in the uncovenanted mercies of God, or imagine he will save us, merely because he made us. Vain and proud men, by their destroying the harmony between mercy and justice, and making the former clash with the latter, have embolden'd lazy indolent sinners thoughtlessly to rely on God's common mercy, and so to neglect the use of all means appointed for their recovery from the ruin they have brought upon themselves; they imagine that God is nothing but mercy, and they cannot be brought to think the bounteous Creator will destroy the works of his own hands, or take pleasure in inflicting everlasting misery on those whom he has brought into being, especially for such faults as, they are apt to plead, are little, and to pretend they cannot help. This infatuation prevails over multitudes, and it is a most fatal delusion, because it cherishes them in idleness, and hides repentance from their eyes; and if they are not ashamed of it, they will mourn at the last, when they find, that if they have no better title to acceptance with God, than merely their being his creatures, he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.

Would sinners but consider the punishment which God inflicted on Satan, and his unhappy confederates in rebellion, they would be ashamed of trusting to God's common mercy.

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The angels who sinned were creatures of a higher class, and a nobler species than the tribes of flesh and blood; and as their strength was much greater than that of men, so they might have had a capacity, had they been recovered, to have served God in cases where spirits cumbered with flesh are not able. Tho' the sons of the morning were God's creatures, and such noble creatures, yet when once they rose up in arms against their Maker, their being the work of his hands did not exempt them from being the marks of the keen bolts of vengeance; but for one breach of their allegiance they were cast out of heaven, and are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day; now nothing but an arrogant, ill-grounded presumption can make the potsherds of the earth expect mercy at the hand of their incensed Sovereign, merely on the account of their being his creatures, when he absolutely denied it to the heavenly princes and potentates, on their revolt from him, tho' they stood in the same relation to him.

The mercy which unbelieving sinners expect from God, on account of their being related to him, as their Creator, is unreasonable, because it is not consistent with his other perfections to bestow it on them; such a mercy thwarts his justice, which was provoked by sin, and which, unless it is satisfied, will flame out in the destruction of the sinner; and can

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we imagine that he will bring a stain on his righteousness, to save without satisfaction such as are unrighteous? It blemishes his holiness, which induces him to hate all impurity, and that for ever, unless it is done away; and can we think he will lessen his purity, to relieve such as have brought pollution on themselves? It is subversive of his truth and faithfulness, which positively denounced death in case of sin, unless atoned for; and can we fancy he will tarnish his veracity, to send help to such as concern not themselves, to look out for a daysman to answer for them? Certainly if we will use our reason, we shall never conclude, that a God of wisdom and power will disgrace his own perfections, to shew mercy to such as have nothing in them but what is odious in his sight, and contrary to him.

It is really a sorrowful and melancholic spectacle, to see men in their sins hovering over the brink of eternity, and yet blindly trusting to the uncovenanted mercies of God; the peace which is in their minds is more like that dull serenity which may be observed in an ox, when going to the slaughter, than such a tranquillity as is fit to recreate the minds of persons endowed with reason; miserable is the case of such sinners, who are thus singing a requiem to themselves, when they are just ready to be arrested by the iron hands of justice, in order to their being cast into that prison, where the ransom of the soul ceases for ever.

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All sinners, who are not reconciled to God, will find that his mercy, as to them, is clean gone, and he will be favourable no more; they must meet him in the thunder of his power, and the glittering armour of his justice, and he will glorify his injured perfections in making them miserable, beyond thought or expression: It highly then concerns all who desire their own welfare, to consider what method they must take, to prevent their falling into the hands of an angry God; which is only by coming to him, in and thro' Christ, who alone can make propitiation for their sins, and so reconcile them to the Judge whom they have provoked.

C H A P. II.

Of Christ, the immediate Object of Saving Faith.

CH RIST is the immediate object of saving faith, as he stands nearest to a sinner for reliance; and as it is thro' him that a sinner must come to God, in order to take a fiducial hold on him, as his reconciled God. Christ is the only person on whom a guilty sinner must rely, thro' whose mediation, as he stands between the power of heaven offended and sinners, he must come to that mighty Maker whom he has provoked. Tho' God the

Father is the first person that faith looks at, yet it is Christ who is the only person on whom faith relies. If we bear in mind the reason of the distinction which is to be made between the fundamental and principal object of faith, which is God, as he is true and faithful, and the immediate and nearest object of it, which is Christ, we may understand the true meaning of the following words of our Saviour, recorded by his beloved apostle, "He who believes on me, believes not on me, but on him who sent me."^a In which words, at the first glance, there may seem a contradiction, but they will admit of this proper sense; such as believe in Christ, and have him for the immediate object of their faith, do not believe in him only, and chiefly, for they have God the Father, who sent him, to be the fundamental and principal object of their trust. Christ is the person who brings sinners forward in their way to the Father, and it is on him only they rest; but their faith is principally built on the Father, as he contrived the stupendous scheme of man's redemption, and gave a sanction to it.

Christ is the immediate object of faith, because in him only God presents himself to our view, as a reconciled God. The apostle Paul^b has declared, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." As God is no where

^a John xii. 44.

^b 2 Cor. v. 20.

to be found, reconciling sinners to himself, but in Christ, so by Christ only we must come to God, to receive the blessing of reconciliation; out of Christ we can only see God sitting on a tribunal of justice, encircled with the flames of justice, cloathed with thunder, and armed with keen bolts of vengeance; but in Christ we may see him exalted on a mercy seat, with his face covered with refreshing smiles, and holding forth the scepter of forgiveness, and may be revived with hearing the sounding of his bowels move with compassion toward us.

There is not one attribute of God that we can look upon with comfort out of Christ: If we think on his justice, we must grant it to be against us, because we are unjust and unrighteous; if we look to his holiness it will confound us, because our souls are become receptacles of pollution; if we regard his faithfulness, it will daunt us, because it will make good every curse and threatening against us; if we respect his wisdom, we shall be swallowed up with sorrow, because it will contrive the most perfect method to bring us to the fullest torment; if we contemplate his omnipotence, it will overwhelm us with fear, because it will glitter in our punishment; and we can never conceive the utmost extent of that misery, which infinite power can inflict upon us; if we ruminate on his eternity, it will hurl us into a gulph of despair, for it is the sting and bitterness of sorrow, when we consider that

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if we perish, we must fall by the hands of a God who lives for ever, and who will never cease to avenge himself upon us; if we muse on his immutability, it will strike us with amaze, because if we fall under the wrath of a law-giver, who is without shadow of turning, there can be no alleviation of our pain, no end of our woe; and let our condition be ever so bad, we can have no prospect of its being better with us; if we fix our minds on his goodness, it will disquiet us, because even this will exact a satisfaction from us, for all the abuses we have cast upon it; nay if we turn our eye to his mercy, it will give us no relief, but will fill us with terror, because it is a holy mercy, and will never put in a plea on our behalf, whilst we are guilty, and yet wilfully despise a Saviour. In short, every attribute of God out of Christ will scare and terrify us, and we cannot look on one of them without trouble; with God indeed there is mercy and plenteous redemption, but this mercy and this plenteous redemption is only conveyed to sinners thro' Christ.

It is in Christ, and by him only, that we can act faith on God, as our God, and as standing in the relation of a covenant God to us; the apostle^a Peter has told us, that it is "thro' Christ we believe in God, who raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that our

^a 1 Pet. i. 21.

faith and hope might be in God." By Christ we believe in God, because he has made way for us to come to God, that we may act faith on him, as a God in covenant with us, and may take comfort from this consideration, that all his perfections that were before engaged against us, are now acting for us.

We can obtain acceptance with God only in and through Christ, therefore when we plead with God for the application of all the benefits of redemption, we must appear before him, resting ourselves on the strength of Christ's merits, and the infinite value of his sacrifice: In him only we can find all things necessary, to deliver us from the ruin which sin has brought upon us, and to confer greater happiness upon us than we lost by the fall; and in him only we can meet with a righteousness to remove our variance with God, and to cover in us whatever is offensive to the pure eyes of his holiness and his jealousy. When faith pleads for our acceptance with God, it regards nothing but the righteousness of Christ, as the ground of that acceptance; for this reason the apostle Paul stiled justifying faith, the faith of Christ, when he said, "We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ." It is only by the faith of Christ that a sinner can be justified, in the sight of God.

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We may justly be afraid to come to God out of Christ, but in him we have liberty of access to the majestic presence of our judge, with freedom and boldness: The apostle Paul^d has informed us, that if we are in Christ, "We have boldness, or freedom of speech, and access with confidence, thro' the faith of him." They who are spiritually united to Christ, may use freedom of speech before God, because they can speak to him in Christ, as children to a father, and not as slaves to a tyrannical master; and as they may use boldness, in expressing the desires of their hearts, and in uttering the requests of their lips before him, so when they pray to him, they may, with a believing confidence, expect the free gift of all the good things which they ask; for no saving benefits will ever be denied to such as have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Tho' there is great encouragement for a sinner to draw nigh to that tremendous God, whom he has offended, in and thro' Christ, there is no room for any transgressor to hope for a favourable reception, who presumes to approach him out of that Mediator, who is able to make up the breach between revolvers and their provoked sovereign; and there is no reason for us to conclude it to be consistent with the divine perfections, for God to par-

^d Εἰ δὲ ἔχομεν τὴν παρρησίαν, καὶ τὴν προσευγὴν ἐν πεποιθήσει διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ. Ephes. iv. 12.

don any rebelling creatures, 'till reparation is made for the injuries offered, without cause, to him, from whom they received their existence, and to whom they are indebted for being what they are; so that it is a dangerous assertion for any to pretend, that God could remit sin without satisfaction: Whether a God of infinite wisdom could have found out any way to have brought about the salvation of men, besides the method he has taken, is a question too high for mortals to decide; but we can hardly think he would have sent his own Son into the world, in order to work out the salvation of his elect, if his injured perfections could have been vindicated, and his provoked justice satisfied any other way, than by a satisfaction of infinite value.

When Adam's transgression was newly committed, and was first made known to the morning stars, which kept their standing, as no doubt but they were filled with love to man; so if we could suppose any spirit, remarkable for his benevolence to the human kind, to whom the whole scheme of recovery by Christ was not made known, to have appeared as an advocate for our first parents, the substance of his pleading for them with God must have been to this effect: Shall all thy other perfections, O Lord, be glorified in thy different works, and shall not thy pure mercy be exalted, and thy undeserved goodness be magnified? Let not this be the only at-
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tribute which shall not display itself with the brightest lustre; goodness is essential to thy nature, and mercy is thy delight; and what more suitable subjects canst thou find to exert it upon, than on these unhappy creatures, who have been seduced to break their allegiance to thee; thy justice has shewed itself, in inflicting deserved punishment on Satan, and those other apostate spirits, who were once our companions in glory, and who with us compassed thy throne, with anthems of praise; and the severest doom was certainly their due, because without temptation they rose up against thee, and manifested the most rancorous hatred to thee, whose creating power brought them into being out of nothing, and to whose bounty they were indebted for the crowns of glory which they wore; but the wretched human pair, tho' they have been guilty of great folly, yet have not sinned out of malice, but have been circumvented by the author of evil, to transgress thy command. Shall the insulting foe obtain his end? Shall he triumph in the destruction of the race of men? Shall his malice be gratified? And shall he have any occasion given him to conclude he has acted his revenge, for being cast from the height of happiness into the lowest misery, by making a fresh ravage on thy works? Shall he have the pleasure to think he has frustrated thy end, in seducing from thee a race of creatures, whom thou madest for thy glory? rather let
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thy mercy, that amiable perfection of thy nature, triumph in rescuing man from the misery, into which his tempter designed to draw him, and let the adversary for ever be rack'd with the torment of being disappointed, when he sees thou wilt make a difference between such as wilfully rebelled against thee, and as a fruit of their implacable hatred to thee, drew others to sin, and such who thro' weakness have yielded to strong temptations, and have incautiously revolted from thee.

Whatever plausibility there might be in reasons thus offered, yet any spirit, inflamed with a severe zeal for his Maker's honour, might thus, on the other side, put in his righteous plea. Thou, O Judge of all, art not only a just but a merciful sovereign, thy service is the most compleat liberty, and obedience to thy commands is the greatest pleasure in which rational creatures can engage; thou requirest nothing of thy servants, but what it is their interest, as well as their duty to perform, so that all who rebel against thee deserve the severest punishment, because no excuse can be made for withdrawing their allegiance from thee, seeing thou requirest not any thing unreasonable, but what is on the contrary advantageous: Shall not incensed justice glorify itself on all who forsake thee, the spring of all blessedness, in order to follow their own will, instead of conforming to thy law, and to make themselves their own end, instead of aiming

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aiming at thy glory? In order to make thy power known, and to shew thy hatred of sin, thou hast given a fearful display of thy justice, in casting out of heaven Satan, and all the celestial potentates, who under his banner conspired against thee the Highest, and hast condemned them to endure an eternity of woe and pain. Notwithstanding this dreadful instance of thy anger, the creatures whom thou hast broughtest into being have ventured to revolt from thee, tho' they knew of the dreadful vengeance thou hadst inflicted on the sons of the morning; so that their guilt is aggravated, in that they have seen the dreadful effects of sin. They were indeed tempted by thy great adversary, but they were furnished with strength to resist any temptation. How could they imagine, that any but an impure apostate from thee, would venture to contradict thy positive word, and have the insolence to tell them, they should not die, tho' they did that on which thou intailedst eternal death? What reason had they to suffer a charge of cruelty to be brought against thee, for prohibiting them the use of one tree, when they possessed all manner of delights in the groves of Eden, and had all kinds of pleasant fruits to regale their appetite, and all sorts of blissful scenes to recreate their senses? What cause had they to hear thee arraigned for malice, in grudging them the knowledge of good and evil, when
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they were adorned with the knowledge of every thing useful to them, and above all with a clear knowledge of thyself, which is the perfection of wisdom? Satan fell, because he vainly pretended to an equality with thy divine Majesty, and these followed his steps, from an arrogant conceit they should be as gods, knowing good and evil; as they have been imitators of his pride, and companions of his fall, they ought to be partakers of his woe: Thy justice has been provoked, and cannot but punish guilt; the lustre of thy holiness would be obscured, wast thou to connive at sin; thy truth and faithfulness would fail, wast thou not to execute the sentence thy mouth has pronounced; and thy wisdom would be disgraced, wast thou to abrogate thy law. At the same time thy mercy is what man is unworthy of, especially since to gratify his pride he has ruined his posterity as well as himself: Shall thy justice remain unsatisfied? Shall thy holiness be tarnished? Shall thy unchangeable truth be altered? And shall thy perfect wisdom be sullied? And this merely to extend thy goodness to creatures who have rendered themselves unfit objects of thy mercy? Far be that from thee! Let the rebels die for ever, rather than any one perfection of thine should remain without being exalted.

When it was thus with man, who when he was in honour continued not, but rendered himself obnoxious to his Maker's displeasure,

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it was impossible he should be restored to the favour of the supreme lawgiver, from whom he had revolted, unless an intercessor should undertake his cause; for the covenant of works did not forbid the substitution of a surety in the room of the transgressor. It was Christ only could appear in the behalf of fallen man, and could say to his provoked Father, "Lo I come, to do thy will, O God." He being a divine person, by assuming the human nature, was able to bring about the recovery of those who were put under him as a head and Saviour: He has amply provided for their help, for he has offered up to justice a satisfaction of infinite value; he has appeased God's anger, in bearing his infinite wrath; and he has magnified the law, and made it honourable, in fulfilling all righteousness, and in undergoing the curse of it, by suffering the punishment of death, which was denounced in case of sin; by this he has abolished death, conquered him who had the power of it, triumphed over the princes of darkness, strip'd the law of its sting, and shut the mouth of hell; by this he has brought life and immortality to light, and has opened a way to the heavenly paradise; the pleasures of which are so great, and the comforts of which are so various, that they can be conceived of fully by none, 'till they come to those blissful

* Psalm xl. 7, 8.

realms of joy, and are brought to repose themselves in those peaceful shades of innocence and rest. There is then the highest reason for sinners to trust in Christ, by whom they can not only be restored to that happiness which they lost in the first Adam, but can be raised to a higher happiness than he had to lose; they who have trusted in him ought to rejoice with a holy triumph, and in raptures of sublime joy to say, Glory to God in the highest, for the peace he has brought upon earth, and for the good-will he has shewed to men; for to us a Saviour has been born, to us a Redeemer is given, who is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of peace, who has finished transgression, made propitiation for iniquity, brought in an everlasting righteousness, and purchased eternal happiness; in him the Father can be just, and yet the justifier of them that by nature are ungodly; mercy and purity are met together, righteousness and peace act in concert, truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down well pleas'd from heaven; the Lord will give us what is substantially good; holiness shall go before him, and shall set us in the way of his steps: Come then let us trust in the Lord Jesus for ever, for he being the Lord Jehovah is the rock of ages; let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, bless his name, and shew forth his salvation day by day; let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth

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be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the fields and all in them be joyful; and let all the trees of the wood exult before the Lord, for he comes to rescue us from ruin, and to crown us with happiness: Salvation then, and strength, and honour, and glory, and power, and blessing be ascribed, with chearful hearts, and joyful lips, to him who was slain, that he might redeem us to God by his blood.

In the method which God has taken, in saving sinners by Christ, he has set all his moral perfections in the most amiable light: Justice is glorified to the utmost, and has vindicated all its rights and royalties, in that a full satisfaction, even a satisfaction of infinite value, has been made to it, by him, who thro' the eternal Spirit, or by the strength of his divine nature, offered himself without spot to God: The holiness of the King of heaven sparkles with the brightest lustre; for he has shewed his hatred of sin to be so great, that he spared not his own son, but freely gave him up for sinners, tho' he knew no sin by inheritance, but only by imputation, and wielded the sword of justice, with all the strength of his almighty arm, against that shepherd, who tho' man, yet was his equal and fellow, when he stood in the place of revolters: The truth of him who is unchangeably faithful is fully established, seeing he has exacted the punishment of the surety who voluntarily undertook to bear it

it : Grace appears in its full beauty, as a Redeemer is provided for sinners, who had destroyed themselves ; and the greatest blessings are bestowed freely on such as are absolutely unworthy : mercy is displayed in all its riches, because ample provision is made for the fitting such as had lost heaven, for the inheritance they had forfeited ; wisdom and power are magnified to the utmost, in God's contriving and completing a method, in which justice and holiness might not be injured, and yet grace and mercy might eminently be exalted.

Seeing then the way of salvation by Christ alone glorifies all the perfections of the Holy one, that scheme of divinity, which makes the whole of man's salvation to be the free gift of God, and the reward of the purchase of Christ, is the most rational scheme in the world ; indeed this doctrine, which has of late been stiled Calvinism, has been scoffed at, as a huddle of foolish opinions, by those who falsely assume to themselves the title of rational divines ; and it is no wonder, for it thwarts the pride which is natural to fallen man, and puts him upon imagining he is wise and able enough to be his own saviour, in the whole or in part ; but tho' it may be ridiculed by such as are strangers to the wisdom which is from above, yet it is agreeable to true reason ; for it is well grounded on the oracles of truth, and is the only way of thinking men can fall

into, to be able to secure to God the glory of all his perfections. If it were supposed with some, that God can pardon sin by absolute sovereignty, or with others, that he will remit it thro' mere mercy, this would disparage his justice, holiness, truth, and wisdom: If men fancy he will accept sincere obedience to a new law of grace, instead of perfect obedience to the old law of works, they attempt to cast a stain on his holiness, in representing him to be pleased with what is imperfect; and they do what they can to blemish his wisdom, in making as if he had at first promulgated too severe a law, and on after-thought saw fit to soften the rigors of it; and in representing him as abolishing a perfect rule, to make room for one which admits of imperfect terms: But these are the whimsical conceits of vain and proud men; and as they are affronting to the most High, so they cannot but move indignation in every pious mind.

As the doctrine of man's salvation by Christ alone is what brings most glory to God, so it is most comfortable to sinners: When a convinced sinner trusts in Christ for reconciliation with God, there is great encouragement for his faith, seeing all the attributes of God are engaged on his side: Justice has no more demands against him, because it is satisfied, and so will witness for him; he is no longer hateful to the pure eyes of God's holiness, for he is reconciled to him in and thro' the Beloved;

loved; he may take comfort from God's unchangeable truth and faithfulness, which is engaged to fulfill all promises of good made to him for the sake of his Saviour; he may expect all necessary to his salvation, from the free grace of God manifested thro' Christ; he may trust in the goodness of the Father of mercies, for the supplying all his wants, and for the pitying his weakness; and he may rejoice, that the wisdom and power of God are employed to keep him from sin, and to bring him to the full fruition of the happiness purchased for him; so that the more faith centers in Christ, the more reason a sinner has to rejoice, and the less ground he has to give way to uneasy cares, and desponding fears.

C H A P. III.

Of Christ, the immediate Object of Saving Faith, in his Person.

EVERY Christian believes the Gospel, and the promises it contains, but his faith must be immediately acted on the person of Christ. When Christ walked about on earth doing good, he restored a blind man^a to his sight; this man the Jews excommunicated, because he would not pronounce him,

^a John x. 16. 24—34.

who kindly healed him, to be a sinner; hereupon our Lord judged it proper to make himself more known to the poor man, and finding him out, said ^b to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and presently after told him, that the person whom his eyes were so happy ^c as to see, was the Son of the Blessed: Hence it appears, that we cannot rightly believe in Christ, unless our faith is founded on his person. Faith respects the person of Christ, as one who has suffered for sinners, and has a fulness of infinite merit, to satisfy for them. There can be no faith in Christ, where there is not a regard to his meritorious sufferings; but this can never be, where there is no faith in his person; faith in the sufferings of Christ pre-supposes faith in his person, for unless we believe in the person suffering, it is a jest to say, we can believe the reality of that person's sufferings.

That Christ may be a fit object for faith, it is necessary a believer in him should ascend to the contemplation of his true and proper divinity, and trust in him, as one infinite in wisdom, power, and goodness; whereas were we to trust in a creature, we should be in a very precarious, miserable condition. The Scripture has ^d declared, that "Cursed is that person who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm;" and on the contrary, ^e that "Blessed is the

^b v. 35.^c v. 37.^d Jeremiah xvii. 5.^e v. 7.

man that trusts in the Lord, whose hope Jehovah is;" the one is like the ^fheath in the wilderness, soon parched up, but the other is like ^ga tree planted by the waters, spreading its roots by the river, whose leaves will be always green, and which will never cease bearing fruit. There is great reason for us to comply with the following exhortation of the prophet ^hIsaiah; "Trust in the Lord for ever, for the Lord Jehovah is the rock of ages." Christ required all such as expected salvation, to trust in him, as one far above the condition of a creature, as may justly be gathered from the following words of his, recorded by his beloved ⁱdisciple, "Except you believe that I am, you shall die in your sins;" which can have no meaning, if we do not understand him here to insist on his necessary existence. Long before Christ appeared in the flesh he proclaimed the necessity of trusting in him, as God, when he spoke thus by the prophet ^kIsaiah, "Look to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else: I have sworn by myself, and the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear; surely shall one say, In Jehovah have I righteousness and strength, to him shall men come, and all that are in-

^f v. 6.

^g v. 8.

^h Isaiah xxvi. 4.

ⁱ Εἰ μὴ πί-

^j σωσῆται ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι, ἀποθανύσθαι ἐν ταῖς ἀμαρτίαις ὑμῶν. John

viii. 24.

^k Isa, xlv. 22—25.

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censed against him shall be ashamed: In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and in him shall they glory:" That these were the words of Christ, the apostle¹ Paul has assured us: As none but the most High could speak in such a stile, so from hence it is apparent, that saving faith must have for its object, Christ, as he is the Lord Jehovah, the God who has mercy on sinners, who cloaths them with the robe of righteousness, and decks them with the garment of salvation.

The Scripture sets forth Christ as the Son^m of God, distinctⁿ from the Father in person, but one God with him, and equally possess'd of all divine perfections: He is declared to be one with the^o Father in nature, to be^p equal with him, and to be possessed of the whole fulness^q of the Godhead: He bears the incommunicable title of^r Jehovah; he is stiled^s God, without any limitation, and in the^t absolute sense; and he is called^u Lord God. He

¹ Rom. xiv. 10, 11. ^m Prov. viii. 22, &c. Mic. v. 2.
 John i. 18. Col. i. 15. Rom. viii. 32. John v. 18. Heb.
 iii. 5, 6. v. 18. ⁿ Luke iii. 21, 22. Matt. xxviii. 19.
 John xv. 26. xvi. 13, 14. 1 John v. 7. Mat. xi. 17. John
 iii. 35. xiv. 31. ^o John x. 30. Heb. i. 3. Col. i. 15.
 Phil. ii. 6. Col. ii. 9. ^p Zech. xiii. 7. John v. 17, 18.
 Phil. ii. 6, 7. ^q Col. ii. 9. ^r Exod. iii, xix, xxiv. often.
 Numb. xxi. 6, &c. Psalm cii. 1, 12. xcvi. often. Hos. i. 7.
 Joel ii. 27, &c. Is. xl, xlv, often. Jer. xxiii. 26. Zech. x,
 12. xi. 12. xii. 1, 10. Mal. iii. 1. ^s Psalm lxviii, often.
 John i. 1. 1 Tim. iii. 16. Heb. iii. 4. Rev. xxi. 7.
^t Mat. i. 22, 23. Acts vii. 32. Heb. i. 8. 2 Pet. i. 1. Luke
 iii. 6. Acts xx. 28. 1 John iii. 16. Rom. xiv. 10, 11, 12.
 Rev. xx. 12. ^u Luke i. 16, 17. John xx. 28. Rev.
 xxii. 6, 7.

Part I. OF SAVING FAITH. 95

is dignified with the high titles of supremacy, for he is the ^w true God, the ^z living God, the ^y great God, the ^z mighty God, the ^a most High, the ^b God over all, Blessed for ever, the only ^c sovereign God and Lord, the ^d King eternal, immortal, invisible, and the only wise God, the ^e blessed and the only Potentate, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, and the ^f Almighty, or the absolute Supreme over all: The incommunicable perfections of the divine nature are ascribed to him, such as ^g necessary existence, ^h eternity, ⁱ immutability, ^k omniscience, ^l immensity, and ^m omnipotence: He is declared to be the ⁿ Creator of all things; and he is held forth, as the object ^o of the supreme adoration of angels and men.

^w 1 John v. 20. ^z Heb. vii. 12. ^y Tit. ii. 13, 14.
 Rev. xix. 18. ^a If. ix. 6. ^b Luke i. 76. ^c Rom. ix.
 5. ^d Jude 4. ^e 1 Tim. i. 17. ^f 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.
^g Rev. i. 8. — xvi. 14, 15. ^h Exod. iii. 14. ⁱ Rev. i.
 8, 10, 17. Prov. viii. 23, &c. Col. i. 17. If. ix. 6. Mic.
 v. 2. John xvii. 5. ^j Heb. i. 10, 11, 12. xiii. 8.
^k Rev. ii. 23. Acts i. 24. John ii. 24, 25. xvi. 13. xxi. 17.
 Heb. iv. 12, 13. Col. ii. 3. ^l Col. i. 17. John iii. 13.
 Mat. xviii. 20. xxviii. 20. ^m Rev. i. 8. Psalm xlv. 3.
 If. ix. 6. lxiii. 1—6. Phil. iii. 20, 21. ⁿ John i. 3.
 Col. i. 15, 16, 17. If. xlv. 18. Heb. i. 8, 9, 10. ^o Psalm
 lxxviii, xcvi. Isa. xlv. 22, 23. Mat. ii. 11. viii. 2, 3, ix.
 18. xv. 22, 25, 28. xvii. Marc v. 2, 6, 7. Mat. viii. 29.
 Luke viii. 28. John ix. 35, 38. Luke v. 8. vii. 41, 42.
 xvii. 15, 16. xix. 37—40. Mat. xxiv. 17. Luke xxiv. 22.
 Acts i. 24, 25. vii. 59, 60. 1 Tim. i. 12, 17. vi. 13—16.
 2 Tim. iv. 18. Heb. xiii. 20, 21. 1 Pet. iv. 11. 2 Pet. ii. 18.
 Jude 24, 25. Rev. i. 5, 6. Heb. i. 6. Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11.
 John v. 33. Rev. v. 8—14. vii. 9, 10.

This

This is the account the Scripture has given us of the great Redeemer of God's elect, and there was a necessity, in the nature of things, that Christ, who undertook the great work of redemption, should have infinite power. He could not have bore the weight of infinite wrath, had he not been almighty; he could not have rendered a satisfaction of infinite value to divine justice, had he not been an infinite person, for no creature can do more than answer the law for himself; he could not sustain the dignity of an universal lordship over the church and the world, was he not infinite in wisdom, almighty in power, and everywhere present; and he would not be fit for the great work of judging the world, if he could be deceived or resisted, or if there could be an appeal to any superior, from the sentence of his righteous tribunal. If it was necessary that our Redeemer should be God, certainly Christ in his divine nature must be the object of faith; or we must rely upon him, and trust in him, as one infinite in wisdom, and almighty in power, who knows all our wants, and who can do all for us, and all in us, necessary to bring us to the enjoyment of that everlasting happiness, which he has purchased for us; having in the days of his flesh, thro' the strength of his divine nature, offered himself a sacrifice without spot to the Father.

If we were to trust in a creature, we could not be assured, let him be supposed ever so wise and strong, that he would never be circumvented or over-powered; and if we trouble ourselves no more about the object of our faith, than to take up with a confused notion of Christ's being the true Messiah, and the Saviour of the world, without concerning ourselves, whether he is a divine person, or a divine power, the true God, or a creature, a superangelical Being, or a mere man, we shall foolishly commit our souls, and our concerns relating to both worlds, to an unknown Saviour, and shall blindly trust in we cannot tell whom; but, certainly, such a magical faith is highly unbecoming rational creatures.

It is a thing which greatly tends to add to our comfort, for us to have the mighty God to be the object of our faith. If Christ is eternal, they who believe in him can, with unspeakable delight, regard him, as having had thoughts of peace towards them, before the world began; and their faith may be assured he will live for ever, to intercede for them, and to preserve the spiritual life, which he bestows upon them, 'till he lays on the top stone of their salvation in glory. Was Christ changeable in his nature, they who commit their souls, as a pledge, to his keeping, could never be certain, that he will not alter his purposes as to them; but if they consider him as unchangeable in his Being, they may justly hope,

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hope, that he will be invariable in his truth, faithfulness and goodness, and so will never reverse his designs of love and mercy towards them. Tho' the strong foundations of the world may be overturned, tho' the heavens may wax old as a garment, and be folded up as a vesture, tho' the earth may be changed, tho' the mountains may depart, and the hills may be removed, yet Christ will remain the same for ever, and so will not suffer his faithfulness to fail, or his mercy to be abolished. If Christ was not infinite in knowledge, they who draw nigh to him by faith could not be satisfied that he hears them, when they cry to him; but when they suppose him to know all things, they may be assured, that he not only knows their wants, but is acquainted with the best methods of supplying them. If Christ's presence was bounded, they who fly to him for refuge might be afraid, lest he should not be near them, when they most need his help; but they may conclude, he is ever ready to succour them, if they believe him to be present with his people always, even to the end of the world. Was Christ's power limited, they who take hold on his strength, could not be certain that no difficulties can obstruct him in his works of mercy; but if they regard him, as invested with omnipotence, they may rest assured, that he is able to complete their salvation, and that he can defend them from all their enemies. Christians must
launch

launch forth into a rough tempestuous sea, but if their conductor is almighty, they need not greatly to fear. Tho' they may have storms of malice furiously to blow upon them, and may have the strong gusts of temptation to hurry and tols them hither and thither; tho' one sea of sorrow may swell upon another, and with a tumultuous noise spread round them; tho' the water-spouts of tribulation may burst over their heads, and tho' the waves and billows of distress may beat upon them; yet if they have an all-wise and almighty pilot, they may be satisfied that their feeble bark will be kept from splitting; for such an one can preserve them, amidst all ruffling storms and hurricanes, 'till he shall safely waft them over the troubled sea of this life, and shall securely place them in the haven of everlasting rest, where constant quiet and calm serenity will for ever attend them.

Christ is fit to be the immediate object of our faith, as he is God; and had he not been so, he could not have gone thro' the work of redemption. The divine nature is impassible, and not capable of being the subject of pain and grief; it was therefore necessary for the Son of God to take the human nature into union with his divine person, and to be God and man in one person, that, as man, he might suffer for sin, and, as God, he might support his human nature, and render his satisfaction infinitely meritorious. In Christ there

there are not two persons, but God and man united in one person, that so there might not be two Saviours, or two Christs, but one Saviour, and one Christ. Christ really was man; he had a true body, and a reasonable soul; he was born of a woman, and that a virgin; and so coming into the world out of the ordinary way of generation, he was free from the taint of original pollution; he took a real body, that he might be capable of suffering the agonies of death, and might have blood to shed for sin, seeing by the appointment of God ^p without shedding of blood there could be no remission: He took also a rational soul, susceptible of the human passions of fear, grief, and amazement. It is a romantic fiction for men to surmise, that our Lord's human soul is a glorious superangelic spirit; for if Christ, the second Adam, had been without a soul of the human kind, he could not have been a proper representative of the sons of men, to rescue them from the ruin which was brought upon them, by the fall and apostacy of the first Adam: Accordingly the Scriptures fully declare, ^q that Christ was made a little lower than the angels, that he who sanctifies, and they who are sanctified are all of one, that he took not on him the nature of angels, but of the seed of Abraham; and that it became him, in all things, to be made like his brethren. It was necessary Christ should have a soul like

^p Heb. xi. 22.

^q Heb. i. 6. ii. 11, 16, 17.

other men, that he might have the tender affections of the human nature, to pity the ignorant, at the same time that he has infinite power, to rescue them from the ruin they have brought upon themselves.

As without controversy it is a great mystery of godliness, that God was manifested in the flesh, so it is a great encouragement to faith, when a Christian considers, that his Saviour, even in his exalted state, retains the compassions of the human nature, and is not ashamed to call such as he redeemed by his death, brethren: He has ascended, with triumph, into heaven, and he sits at the right hand of God, crowned with great glory; but the same tenderness to his people remains in him, which filled his heart, when, for their sins, he condescended to groan and bleed, to sigh and die: A Christian by faith then, may with boldness approach the throne of grace, since the Intercessor has tender compassions to pity him, being man, as well as infinite power to help him, being the great God over all blessed for ever.

This great mystery of godliness, that God was manifested in the flesh, has been always a stone of stumbling to the proud pretenders to reason, and those, who cannot be content without being wise above what is written, and bring themselves to fancy, they can form clear

1 Tim. iii. 16.

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and

and bright ideas of the mode of Scripture mysteries. The wit of men has been employed in all ages in forming schemes to rob Christ of his true personality, divinity, or humanity: His personality is often denied, some will have him to be a name, others an attribute or property, and others a power of God the Father: As to his Deity, it is by many opposed; some plead that he is a mere man, others that he was originally a common angel, others that he is the first and greatest of creatures, and others that he is neither supreme God, nor yet a creature, as if there could be any such monstrous chimerical being; others deny the union of his human nature with his divine person, and so make two Christs: As to his humanity, some pretend he only took flesh in appearance, others that his humanity is absorbed by his divinity; some will have the divinity, and others a glorious angelic, archangelic, or superangelic spirit, to supply the place of a human soul. In short no absurdity can be thought of, which has not been advanced on this head; Christ may be nothing, or any thing but what he really is, God and man in one person. The abettors of these corrupt fancies, tho' ever so opposite, can embrace one another as brethren, and no wonder, for they are all either maliciously, or ignorantly carrying on the same bad cause, which is opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus. This glorious doctrine that Christ, who tho' distinct from the
 Father

Father in person, is yet one supreme God with him, took into union with his divine person the human nature, consisting of a true body, and a rational soul, and so is and will for ever continue to be truly God and truly man in one person, which has from the beginning been the butt of Satan's opposition, has hitherto kept its ground, and will do so, when the schemes of men of corrupt minds will sink into oblivion; for truth is great, and will prevail; on this rock the church is founded, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

If it is necessary that our faith should be acted on Christ, as a divine person, that it may have a sure foundation, certainly we ought always to entertain high thoughts of him, and to receive him as our Lord and our God, and then, under all the shakings of partial unbelief, we may rest satisfied, that he is able to keep what we commit to him, 'till he shall bring us to behold his face in righteousness, in the other world: when men entertain low thoughts of Christ, and are contriving schemes to rob him of the glory of his supreme Deity, and to bring him down to the rank of creatures, they are making an attempt, tho' it is an impotent effort, to take from the Christian all good ground for his faith and hope; and when, in order to bring this about, they make use of the inferior characters, under which the Scripture has often represented the Son of God, and which belong to him as he is man

and mediator, they shew the highest ingratitude to him who humbled himself for their sakes, and return hatred for love, and contempt for kindness; for what was Christ's end in submitting to obey the Father, as his servant, when he was equal to him in perfections, and in appearing as a man, nay a miserable man, when he was by nature God over all, but to bring about the salvation and recovery of man, who when he was in honour continued not? Shall not we then be guilty of the vilest ingratitude, if we make an attempt to lessen Christ's personal glory, from his having abased himself in order to do us good? Far be such a temper from us, and let it raise the utmost indignation in every ingenuous breast! the disputers of this world, giving way to vain philosophy, and science falsely so called, may see no form, nor comeliness in the great God manifested in the flesh, and may descry no beauty in him, so as to desire him; but it is our folly if their vitiated taste keeps us from relishing our true joys; we should, by faith, behold Christ's glory, as of the only begotten Son of God, and remember, that tho' for a while he shrouded his awful glories in a tabernacle of flesh, yet the entire fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily.

Let us then, to use the words of 'a great, as well as polite divine of the ancient church,

ἡ ἐν ἡμετέροις προσάγει τῇ Θεότητι, καὶ τῇ ἀρετῇ φύσει καὶ ζωῇ καὶ σώματι· τὰ δὲ ταπεινότερα, τῷ συνδέει, καὶ τῷ διὰ σὶ

κινῶν.

a little altered, grant all the high characters, which we find ascribed to Christ in Scripture, to belong to his divine nature, which is with-

κινωθέντι καὶ σαρκωθέντι — καὶ ἀνθρωποθίντι, ἔτα καὶ ὑψωθέντι. ἵνα σὺ τῶν δογμάτων σε σαρκικὸν καὶ χαμιερπὲς καταλύσας, μάθῃς ὑψηλότερος εἶναι — καὶ γινώσκῃς τίς μὲν φύσις λόγος, τίς δὲ λόγος οἰκονομία. οὗτος γὰρ ὁ πῦρ σοι καταφρογόμενος ἦν ὅτι καὶ ὑπὲρ σε ἦν· ὁ νῦν ἀνθρώπος καὶ ἀσύνθετος ἦν· ὁ μὲν ἦν διέμεινον, ὁ δὲ ἔκ ἦν, προσέλαβεν ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ἀναιτίως· τίς γὰρ αἰτία Θεῷ; ἀλλὰ καὶ ὕστερον γέρονε δι' αἰτίαν· ἡ δὲ ἦν, τὸ αἰ σωθῆναι τὴν ὑβρίσιν· — ἐγγενήθη μὲν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐγγενήντο· ἐκ γυναικὸς, ἀλλὰ καὶ παρθένου· τῆτο ἀνθρωπινόν, τῆτο θεῖον, ἀπάτωρ ἐντιῦθεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀμήτωρ ἐκείθεν — ἰσοπαργαυθῆ μὲν, ἀλλ' ἀποπαργαυθῆται τὰ τῆς ταφῆς ἀνισάμενος· ἐν φετνῇ μὲν ἐνυκλίδῃ, ἀλλ' ὑπ' ἀγγέλων ἐδοξάσθη, καὶ ὑπὸ ἀστέρος ἐμανήθη, καὶ ὑπὸ μαγνῶν προσκυνηθῆ — ἔκ ἔχεν ἔδος, ἔδὲ κάλλος παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις, ἀλλὰ τῷ Δαβὶδ ὠραίος ἦν κάλλος παρὰ τὲς ὕψος τῶν ἀνθρώπων· ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρεσ' ἀστράπτει, καὶ ὡς φωτοειδέστερος γίνεται· — ἐκαπτίσθη ὡς ἀνθρώπος, ἀλλ' ἀμαρτίας ἔλυσεν ὡς Θεός· — ἐπειράσθη ὡς ἀνθρώπος, ἀλλ' ἐνίκησεν ὡς Θεός· ἀλλὰ θάρρεν διακελυέται, ὡς κόσμον νικητικῶς ἐπίνησεν· ἀλλ' ἔδραψε χιλιάδες, ἀλλ' ἄρτος ἐστὶ ζωτικὸς καὶ ἑράνιος· ἐδόξασεν, ἀλλ' ἐδόκουν, ἵαν τις διψᾷ, ἐρχέσθω πρὸς με, καὶ πινέτω· ἀλλὰ καὶ πηγάζειν ὑπέσχετο τὲς πισυνόντας· ἐκοπίασιν, ἀλλὰ τῶν κοπιώντων καὶ πεφορτισμένων ἐστὶν ἀνάπαυσις· ἐβαρύνθη μὲν ἕνθα, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πελάγῃς κερρίζεται, ἀλλ' ἐπιτιμᾷ πηγύμασιν, ἀλλὰ Πέτρον κερρίζει βαπτίζόμενον· δίδωσι τέλος, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἔχθους, ἀλλὰ βασιλεύει τῶν ἀπαιτύντων. Σαμαρίτης ἀκμῇ καὶ δαμμονῶν, πλὴν σώζει τὸν ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ καταβαίνοντα, καὶ λησαῖς παραπεσόντα· πλὴν ὑπὸ δαιμόνων ἐπιγινώσκειται, καὶ ἀπειλαίνει δαίμονας, καὶ λεγιῶνας πνευμάτων βυθίζει, καὶ ὡς ἀστράπην ὁρᾷ πίπτοντα τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῶν δαιμόνων· λιθάζεται, ἀλλ' ἔχ' ἀλίσκεται· προσεύχεται, ἀλλ' ὑπακούει· δακρύει, ἀλλὰ πάνυ δάκρυον ἔρωτᾷ πῶ τίθεται Λάζαρος, ἀνθρώπος γὰρ ἦν· ἀλλ' ἐγείρει Λάζαρον, Θεὸς γὰρ ἦν· πωλεῖται, καὶ λίαν ευώνας τριάκοντα γὰρ ἀργυρίων· ἀλλ' ἐξαγοράζει κόσμον, καὶ μεγάλης τίμης, τῷ ἰδίῳ γὰρ αἵματος· ὡς πρόβατον ἐπὶ σφαγῇ ἀζυγῆται, ἀλλὰ ποιμαίνει τὸν Ἰσραὴλ, νῦν δὲ καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκυμένην ὡς ἄμνος ἄφωτος, ἀλλὰ Λόγος ἐστὶ, φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, καταγελλόμενος μεμαλάκισαι καὶ πετραυμάτισαι, ἀλλὰ θραπτεύει πᾶσαν νόσον, καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον ἀνάγεται, προσπήνεται· — ἀλλὰ σώζει καὶ λησὴν συσσυρέμενον, ἀλλὰ σκοτίζει πᾶν τὸ ὁρώμενον· ὅξος ποτίζεται, χαλὴν βρωματίζεται· τίς; ὁ τὸ ὕδωρ εἰς οἶνον μεταβαλὼν· — παραδίδωσι τὴν ψυχὴν, ἀλλ' ἐξουσίαν ἔχει πάλιν λαβεῖν αὐτήν, ἀλλὰ καταπέτασμα ἐρήνεται, — ἀλλὰ πέτραι σχίζονται, ἀλλὰ νεκροὶ προεγείρονται· ἀποθνήσκει, ζωοποιεῖ δὲ, καὶ καταλύει τὸ θάνατον· τὸν θάνατον θάπτεται, ἀλλ' ἀνίσταται· εἰς αἰὸς κάτῃσιν, ἀλλ' ἀνάγει ψυχὰς, ἀλλ' εἰς ἑρᾶν ἐς ἀνέσιν· ἀλλ' ἔτι κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκροὺς. Gregorius Nazianzen. Orat. xxxvi. seu Orat. iii. de Theologia. Vol. I. p. 574, 575, 576. Ed. Paris.

out body, parts, or passions ; and let us attribute the lower characters to him, as he assum'd our nature, was made man, humbled himself for us, and was afterwards exalted ; and then we shall not take up with low thoughts of him, but shall rise in our conceptions concerning him, and shall know what belongs to him as God, and what as man and Mediator. He whom men now despise was, from eternity, above them ; he who is now a man, was without composition ; what he always was, he ever continues to be ; and what he had not, he assumed : In the beginning he was without an efficient, for what can be the efficient cause of God ; but afterwards he was made, for a certain reason, which was to save many that cast contempt on him : As man he was born of a woman, a virgin, and so was without father ; but as God, he was eternally begotten of the Father, and so was without mother : He was bound as a child, but he could break the very bands of the grave, when he rose from the dead : He was laid in a manger, but he was glorified by the angels ; the stable in which he was born was pointed out by a star, and he was worship'd by the wise men, who came for that purpose from a far country : He had no form nor comeliness in the eyes of the Jews, but to David's faith he appeared fairer than the children of men ; and on the mount of transfiguration, his face was like lightening, and outshone the sun in brightness :

ness: He was baptized as man, but as God he had power to take away sin; he was tempted as man, but as God he overcame the tempter, nay he could command his followers to be of good cheer, because he has overcome the world: he was hungry, but he fed the bodies of thousands, nay more, he is the living heavenly bread, which refreshes the soul: He was athirst, but he had power to cry, "If any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink;" and he can cause the water which he gives to such as are athirst, to be in them a fountain springing up to eternal life: He was sometimes weary, but he is the rest of the weary and heavy laden: He was once overcome with sleep in a storm, and so was exposed seemingly to danger, but with a rebuke he could still the winds; and at another time could walk on the sea, and save Peter from sinking: He paid tribute as a subject, but he caused a fish to supply his present want, shewing himself thereby to be the Lord of those who demanded it of him: He was called a Samaritan, and was reproached as one possessed with a devil, but as the good Samaritan, he saves such as cannot help themselves; nay, he was acknowledged to be the Son of God by the devils; he had ability to cast them out, and to drive legions of evil spirits into the sea; and he saw the prince of the infernal hosts flying like lightening from the power of his arm: He was stoned, but he

could keep himself from being taken, whilst his hour was not come: He prayed, but he is the hearer of prayer: He wept, but he wipes the tears from all faces: He enquired where Lazarus was laid, for he was man, but he could raise Lazarus from the dead, for he was God: He was sold, and that at a low rate, but he purchased the world with the most costly price, even his own precious blood: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, but as the great shepherd of the sheep, he fed Israel of old, and now feeds the whole world; as a Lamb he was dumb, but he was God the Word, whose coming was proclaimed by the voice of one crying in the wilderness: He was abused and wounded, but he can heal every malady: He was fastened to the accursed tree, but whilst he hung there, he sav'd a thief who was crucified with him, and spread darkness over the world: He drank vinegar, and eat gall, but he was no less than the same person who had turned water into wine: He yielded up his spirit, but he had power to take it again; and at the same time the veil of the temple was rent, the rocks were tore, and many dead were raised: He died, but he gives life to others, and by death he has abolished death: He was buried, but he rose again: He continued under the power of death for a time, but he raises souls from a death in sin, and he has ascended into heaven, and shall come again, to judge the quick and the dead.

Christ

Christ is a complex person, 'man as well as God, and he is Mediator by office, and as such the Father's righteous servant, as well as one supreme God with him, and as such equal to him. Hence it is that the Scripture, tho' it has secured his honour, by declaring his infinite perfections, has yet very often represented him under inferior characters, as was most congruous and proper. Were it not for this, his enemies would really have nothing to say against his true divinity; and as they borrow their ammunition to assault this, from what the Scriptures say of him as he is man and Mediator, their guilt is very great, and attend-

* Si Deus sequendus erat, si Deum sequi minime licebat, nisi videretur; si videri non poterat nisi homo fieret, ut homines non verbis tantum sed exemplis in verissimae virtutis studium incitaret, quid potuit ad hominum salutem utilius & providentius fieri, quam ipsum Dei filium intueri, pro hominum salute confixum maledictis, conditum vulneribus, excruciatum doloribus, invictaque patientia, haec omnia perferentem, ut non modo poenas pro nobis lueret, verum & nostros animos divinae virtutis exemplo & invicta patientia confirmaret? Quis igitur ulli mortalium scrupulus potest inhaerere defixus, si de potentia divina non ambigit, si Dei bonitatem nullis finibus arceri confiteatur? Si nullum beneficium fuit magis immensae bonitati consentaneum, quid relinquitur, quod hominum fidem impedire possit, quo minus animo grato id complectatur? Neque enim Dei naturam dicimus dolore affectam, neque immutatam, neque majestatem illius imminutam affirmamus. Quicquid enim molitur & efficit sine mutatione efficit. In Christo quidem latebat, sed naturam universam suo numine continebat: Et cum homo pateretur, Deum nullus dolor attingebat; sed tantum sub hominis veri forma, & specie humani generis salutem constituebat. Admiramini quod homo fieri vellet? Admirationem auferte, infinitae namque bonitatis est mentes sibi infinita ratione devincere. *Grævius Orat. de Verit. Relig. Christ. p. 98. Ed. Burmanni.*

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ed with the highest aggravations. Sinners are too prone to entertain low thoughts of the great Redeemer, because he appeared without pomp and terror, but came in the form of a mean miserable man; as this was that he might be in a capacity to work out their salvation, they shew themselves to have no taste of kindness, for had it been as subservient to our Lord's end, he could easily have come attended with legions of angels. Men are too apt to undervalue the Saviour of the world, because he suffered himself to be abused and insulted, and submitted to be an object of the greatest contempt; but as they manifest herein great stupidity, in not seeing the beauty of patience and meekness which eminently shined in him, so they act a base spirit, not to be thankful that he endured all this for them. Such as have not their views extended beyond this world are ready to slight Christ, because he did not deliver himself when his enemies dared him to it; these evidence a sordid temper, in not being filled with wonder, that he should bear all this to promote their good, when with one angry frown he could have struck down all his enemies in a moment. Ignorant creatures are inclined to despise a crucified Messiah, because he submitted to a shameful and a cruel death, but in this they bring upon themselves the brand of the vilest ingratitude, seeing he did this to satisfy the justice of God for them; whereas on his own account he
had

had no occasion to have died. Conceited mortals may condemn the Prince of life, for stooping to the power of death, and for lying in the grave, but they bring themselves under the charge of being unaffected with the best benefits, since his end in doing this was, that by rising from the dead, he might abolish death, and proclaim his victory over the prince of darkness, and might ascend into heaven, to be the constant and powerful intercessor, for those who in themselves have nothing to recommend them to God. All who have experienced any thing of the love of Christ are so far from harbouring mean thoughts of him, because he condescended to stoop very low on their account, that they prize him the more for it; they are never for stripping him of his supreme Deity, because he was pleased to veil the glories of it, that its majesty might not hinder him from suffering and dying for them: They begin that work on earth, in which they shall engage without imperfection, and with the greatest delight, when making a part of the heavenly choir, they shall, in the realms of joy, ascribe praise and glory in the most rapturous strains, to the Son of God, who when he was rich, became poor, that he might redeem them from condemnation by his blood.

C H A P. IV.

Of Christ, the immediate Object of Saving Faith, in his mediatorial Offices.

SAVING faith must have a regard to Christ's person, because otherwise a sinner can never be satisfied whether Christ is able to perform the work, and fill up the offices he has undertaken, or not. He is not only the immediate object of faith in his person, but likewise in all those offices, which he, as Mediator, has engaged to perform for his Father's glory, and the good of men. True faith relies on Christ as a priest, it hearkens to him as a prophet, and it submits to him as a king; but tho' it receives him in all his offices, yet as it justifies, it regards him as a priest, atoning for sins by the sacrifice of himself; and it cannot, in this sense, be said to look to him as a prophet or as a king.

Christ is the immediate object of saving faith as he is a priest, for the priestly office of Christ, or Christ's satisfying justice, fulfilling the law and suffering death, is the first thing a convinced sinner looks at; and it is the only object of faith, so far as it is employed in the business of the justification of a sinner before God. When Christ, by the prophet ^a Zechari-

^a Zech. xii. 1, 10.

ah, foretold the restoration of Israel which is to be in the later days, he declared they should look to him as pierced for sin; and as he was truly God, who was to become man, he could introduce the promise, in the following majestic manner, "Thus says Jehovah who stretches forth the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him:—I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." When the impenitent Jews are converted, they will look upon Christ as pierced, and the case is the same with all convinced sinners; but Christ was pierced and bruised for sin, as he was a priest, offering up himself to the stroke of justice; therefore it is to him, as a priest bleeding to death for sin, that faith looks in justification.

There can be nothing of greater concern to us than our justification before God, therefore we cannot be easy, without right conceptions concerning the object of justifying faith, which ^b is Christ, in his priestly office fulfilling the law, and suffering death, and not Christ in his prophetic office, teaching his people by his word and Spirit, nor Christ in his kingly office, ruling his subjects in righteousness. Saving faith receives Christ in all his offices; it

^b See Mr. Richard Taylor's Scripture doctrine of Justification, p. 143, 144, 145.

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believes his instructions, and submits to his authority, as well as trusts in his merits ; but as faith justifies, it clasps about Christ as he hung on the cross, and there shed his precious blood for sin, which was as priest, and not as prophet or king.

Christ is the object of justifying faith no other way than he is proposed by God to sinners, and this is as he is bruised for sin, or as a priest offering up sacrifice. Thus he was propounded, in the first promise God made of salvation to Adam and Eve, after the fall, whilst he thus passed sentence on the devil, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." On this promise of Christ the antediluvian patriarchs lived for two thousand years; this was the first dawning of the light of pardoning grace, after the unreasonable revolt of man had brought a black night of obscurity over the world: It is comprised in few words, but all the subsequent declarations of the Gospel have been no more than an ample comment on this short promise; in it Christ's sufferings and death are foretold, the devil was to bruise his heel, or to wound his flesh in the black day of his sufferings: and at the same time Christ's glorious resurrection, ascension, and victory over Satan was predicted; the promised seed

• Gen. iii. 15.

was

was to bruise his head, and thereby spoil all his subtil designs, and malicious contrivances, and destroy that power and policy of the author of evil, whereby he had ingulphed mankind in misery. The bruising of Christ's heel went before the bruising the devil's head, for he died, before he fully obtained the conquest over Satan; by death he disarmed him, and took from him the power of destroying believing sinners. The apostle Paul has^d told us, "It was thro' death he destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." The death of Christ preceded the destruction of Satan's power, therefore our faith must look to Christ, as a priest, agonizing and bleeding to death on the cross, before we can look to him as a king, crowned with honour and conquest, ascending on high, leading captivity captive, spoiling the princes of the kingdom of darkness, and dragging the infernal powers, as chain'd slaves, thereby shewing his conquest over the wicked spirits, who range about to do mischief, in heavenly places.

It was the priestly office of Christ that was typified and proposed to be believed, in the legal sacrifices, with respect to which the apostle * has told us, "The law had a shadow of good things to come." The legal sacrifices were shadows of good things to come, because they

^d Heb. ii. 14. ^e Heb. x. 1.

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were types and images of the perfect sacrifice of Christ's death. As Christ was shadowed in them, he is to be eye'd by our faith in justification; for believers under the Mosaic institution had no other Gospel than what is revealed to us, in these later ages, with greater clearness: Now in the Levitical sacrifices, Christ was neither shadowed forth in the royalties of his supreme dominion, nor in the miraculous power of his resurrection, nor in the triumphs of his ascension, nor in the honours which accrue to him, by his sitting exalted at the right hand of God, but he was typified in his priestly office, or in the bitter agonies of his death; therefore the object of the faith of the Old Testament believers was Christ, as a priest, and such he must be to our faith, when we look to him for justification.

The object of justifying faith must be the same with what affords delight and satisfaction to God, when he justifies sinners; but the death of Christ, the great high-priest of our profession, is that from which God draws all his satisfaction, when he justifies the ungodly; hence we are said, by the apostle^f Paul, to be justified by the blood of Christ. When God justifies sinners, he looks upon them as sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and pronounces them righteous, on the account of his righteousness, which fully answers the demands of

^f Rom. v. 9.

his law and justice: Now Christ performed the office of a priest, and not of a prophet, or king, when he answered the righteousness of the law, in obeying every precept, and in suffering all the penalty; therefore his priestly office must be the only object of the faith of sinners, as their faith is justifying.

The first and ^{is} the only thing which can administer comfort to a sinner, struck down with a sense of his guilt, is Christ as he fulfilled the law, and suffered death; nor can any thing give rest or ease to one troubled in conscience, but Christ in his priestly office: When a convinced sinner looks about every way for help, he can find nothing else fit to be the stay of his afflicted soul: If we mention to such a person his duties, he is but the more disturbed, because the best duties any man on earth can perform, have so many sinful mixtures twisted with them, that they need the blood of Christ to purify them: If we bid him draw comfort from his sincere purposes and intentions to repent, and to lead a new life, as we do nothing better than sew pillows of presumption under his elbows, so we raise his fears instead of laying them; for he may say, Supposing I could do all this, what shall I do to make recompense for my former sins? If we advise him to go away, and be farther

^s See Mr. Nathanael Taylor's discourse of faith in Christ, p. 25—33.

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humbled for his sins, we do but run him into a labyrinth of inextricable mazes, for he may ask, How shall I know when I am humbled sufficiently? If we tell him of the mercy of God, this will still leave him comfortless, for he may answer, There is a powerful unrelenting justice to be appeased, before I can partake of mercy: If we direct him to go to Christ as a king, this will rather strike him dead, than infuse the life of comfort into him, for he may reply, I have not obeyed the king of righteousness and peace, and so have reason to fear, that his royal power will be employed to destroy me for my disobedience: If we counsel him to go to Christ as a prophet, this will leave him in the depth of sorrow, for he may justly rejoin, This makes against me, for I have been refractory, and have not hearkened to Christ's teachings: If all imaginable ways are tried, it is impossible to bring a convinced sinner to a true composure of mind, or to raise in him any hope of forgiveness, 'till we call upon him, and encourage him to receive Christ in his priestly office, as pierced for sin, and lying drenched in blood. Such advice will be precious balm to heal his festering wounds, and a rich cordial to raise and revive his drooping spirits.

We can scarce think it is wholly without reason, that the priestly office of Christ is the only one which God has confirmed by oath; and that he ratified this by his oath, is plain

from these words of the royal ^h Psalmist, "The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." The prophetical and kingly offices of Christ stand sure on an unalterable foundation, but God swore only to his priestly office, not barely to render it irrevocable, but also to provide for the satisfaction of repenting sinners, and to lay a perpetual unshaken groundwork for their comfort. God being willing more fully to satisfy the heirs of promise, of the immutability of Christ's priesthood, confirmed it by his oath, that by two immutable things, his word and his oath, wherein it is impossible for God to deceive, they may have strong consolation, who fly for refuge to Christ, and lay hold on him, as the hope set before them: Therefore it is the priestly office of Christ which we must first cast our eyes upon, when we look up to God for pardoning mercy, seeing God has sworn to it, and confirmed it by his oath, to put us out of doubt concerning its stability, that it might be a never-failing support to us under all burdens, and in the midst of all fears and temptations. As it was the priestly office, or Christ fulfilling the law, and dying for sin, wherein the justice of God only found satisfaction, so it is in this only that troubled, disturbed, and despairing sinners can find rest; therefore Christ as a priest, an-

^h Psalm cx. 4.

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swering the law, and bleeding to death upon the cross, is the only object of justifying faith.

If we are not distinct in our conceptions about the object of faith, as it justifies, which is the priestly office of Christ, we shall run into confusion, and shall, before we are aware, fall into the error of such as mix works with faith, in the justification of a sinner before God. It has by some been pretended, that a sinner is justified in the same way in which he receives Christ, but he receives Christ as a king and prophet, as well as a priest, and in receiving Christ as a king and prophet, he acts obedience, for his prophetic and kingly office have respect to obedience; therefore it is not faith alone in Christ, as a priest, but obedience to him as a prophet and king, that justifies a sinner before God: But we shall not be involved in such a heap of confusion, if we keep close to this position, well warranted by Scripture, that tho' saving faith receives Christ in all his offices, yet in the point of justification, it trusts in him only as a priest.

When we apply ourselves to God, for the renewed pardon of our sins, our acceptance with him depends upon Christ, as a priest, being the object of our faith: And we can have no good success when we pray for forgiveness, unless we fix the eye of our faith only on Christ as a priest, with streams of blood issuing from his side. As Christ carries only his blood and his righteousness into the holiest

of all, when he pleads our cause with God, so we must bring only the blood and righteousness of Christ, or we must have our faith only acted on him as a priest, when we pray or plead for ourselves before God. Upon every new sin committed by a Christian, Christ in heaven pleads the vertue of that sacrifice, which he offered up once for all; were it not for this, the just indignation of God would continually take hold of the greatest saint on earth. What Christ does for saving a Christian from destruction, upon the commission of new sins, the same he must do for himself, to maintain his comfort, and to secure his acceptance with God, when he has sinned; and what is this, but to act his faith only on the infinite merits of Christ's death, when he draws nigh to God, to sue out, and to plead for the pardon of his new sins? If he does this, God will not frown him from his presence, or send him empty away, but he shall see the face of his heavenly Father covered with refreshing smiles, and shall be delighted with hearing these reviving words, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.

Tho' if we will be accurate in our conceptions, we must constantly aver, that faith, as it justifies, only looks to Christ as a priest, yet we must never deny that faith, taken in its full extent, has a regard to him in his other offices: It receives him as a prophet, for when a sinner is once convinced of his ignorance,

he accepts of Christ, as a prophet to teach him, and to dispel the thick fogs and mists of darkness, which cloud the eyes of his mind, and hide spiritual things from him: As the first thing he is inquisitive about is, what his Redeemer will do for him to save him, so the next thing he enquires after is, what his Saviour would have him to do, or what he must do for him. Christ is the great prophet of the church, and all his teachings are authoritative, and carry with them a persuasive energy. The teachings of men are from him, as to their authority and efficacy; for if they are not according to what he has revealed, they are but fancies and devised fables; and if they are consonant to his revelation, without his influential concurrence, they prove unsuccessful. It is the divine instructor only that can teach with efficacy, for he can convince the judgment, and persuade the heart.

When the great prophet teaches sinners, he works humility in them, and prepares them to submit to his instructions; by this means they are delivered from their former false opinions, and are divested of all proud conceit of their own wisdom: They are not required to lay aside their reason, in things that come under its cognizance, and lie within its sphere, for true Christianity strengthens reason, and highly improves it: Christ, in acting as a prophet to his disciples, offers no violence to reason, but rectifies it, disburdens it of the clogs
of

of prejudice, and brings it into subjection to faith, in things which can be known no other way than by revelation; and when he has brought the unsettled reason of sinners into order, and under government, they have a teachable frame, and are prepared to listen to what he says.

When Christ has wrought a humble frame in sinners, he creates light in the soul, and a spiritual ear to hear him; and so having given them a faculty of discerning, he seals up instruction to them, and having opened their ear to discipline, he commands them to depart from iniquity, and they do not prove refractory, but obedient to his precept. As the heart of a sinner is naturally hardened, and shut against the truth, so his ear is deaf, and it must be unstopped by the working of Christ's strong power; his intellectual ear is covered with the thick film of ignorance, unbelief, and obstinacy, and nothing of the Gospel can enter, 'till Christ makes way for it. When Christ has given sinners ears to hear, and hearts to consider all he has spoke and said in the oracles of truth, he commands them to return from iniquity; he does this persuasively, as he sweetly allures, and gently draws them, by the sense of his love; and he does it authoritatively, as he strikes their conscience, and brings them to bend to his precepts.

Christ as a prophet efficaciously impresses the truths of the Gospel on the minds of sinners, by a powerful inward illumination: Indeed the greatest truths may be inwardly revealed to the conscience, and be attended with no other fruits than abortive convictions; but when truths are efficaciously impressed, they get into the heart, and the impression which is made on a sinner can never be wore out. When it is thus, the word of God, or the Gospel, as the apostle ¹Peter says, endures for ever. When Christ works savingly on sinners, he proposes to them the truths of the Gospel, with a sufficient light of evidence and conviction; but he does not stop here, he impresses the truths he proposes on their hearts, with a prevailing efficacy, and a transforming operation, and then they receive the truth in the love of it, and the truth makes them free.

When faith hearkens to Christ as a prophet, it submits to him as a king; for when a sinner is made sensible, he is by nature a captive to the power of sin, he chooses Christ for his king, to subdue his lusts, and rout all the armies of his indwelling corruptions. A sinner takes Christ for his king, when all his lusts shrink under the feet of that mighty Lord to whom he submits, when his whole soul stoops to his authority, and when he offers up to him the adoration of his heart, and the service

of his life. Sinners by nature are under the tyranny of lust; tho' all its dictates are unreasonable, yet they obey, contrary to all reason, and their bondage is the worst thralldom, because they are vassals by their own consent. Sinners are born in slavery, and come into the world with fetters and shackles on them; they are also taken captive by Satan, and are in deplorable servitude to the vilest being in the creation; but they are besides slaves by consent, for they give themselves up to the conduct of sin, and instead of being uneasy at their unhappy condition, hug their chains, and are pleased with their miserable lot. All men are in this state by nature, but when they come under the dominion of grace, the tyrant sin is deposed, and its power broke by the irresistible strength of Christ, who then sits king in the heart, and will admit no rival; and when he reigns, he commands nothing but what is good, and tends to the welfare and salvation of him to whom it is enjoined; therefore his service is perfect freedom; it is not our enthrallment, but our greatest liberty, to be absolutely bound up to the will of Christ, seeing it is no other than the fountain of all righteousness; and it is not an intrenchment on our liberty, to have Christ to choose for us, because he has skill and faithfulness to choose infinitely better than we can for ourselves. Christ as a king reigns in us, when the workings of our hearts, as well as the actions of
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our lives, are brought under the government of his laws; and we strive to obey his commands, even when they cross our inclinations, and put us upon the most difficult points of self-denial. If we endeavour to think not what we ourselves will, but what Christ will have us, if we set ourselves to desire not what we naturally covet, but what he propounds as good for us, and if we labour not to do what suits the corrupt flesh, or serves our interest, but what brings glory to him, his throne is erected in our hearts.

Christ will be exceeding terrible to all sinners that refuse his sway; as he is the living God, so he is an everlasting king; at his wrath the earth trembles, and all the nations of the world will not be able to endure one drop of his indignation. Christ acts towards sinners, in this life in pity and compassion, and stands ready to employ his kingly power, to save them from evil; but if they live and die rebels, there will be a dreadful change of his carriage towards them, in the other world: He now makes the day spring from on high to visit them, and encircles their tabernacle with beams of light; but then he will pass them by for ever, and leave them in a state of horror and endless despair: They may here see him offering to bring them out of prison, and to set their feet in a large place; but hereafter they will feel the severity of his justice, and shall eternally howl under the weight of his anger:

ger: they may, whilst the day of grace lasts, have a view of him, that may calm their minds, and raise a spring of consolation in them; but when the night comes, they will have a sight of him which will gripe their conscience, and encrease their terrors: They may at present behold him as a tender condescending Saviour; but afterwards it must be as their implacable enemy and inexorable judge: As long as they hear the still small voice, they may look to him as a prince exalted, to give them faith and repentance; but when he speaks from the secret place of thunder, he will appear as a God of vengeance, with a rod of iron in his hand to break them in pieces. It is then the wisdom of sinners, to make a voluntary resignation of themselves to Christ's government and conduct, for if his wrath is once kindled but a little, so as to flame out against them, they shall utterly perish from the way.

If we by faith receive Christ in all his offices, as he is a priest to justify us, as he is a prophet to enlighten us in the things of God, and as he is a king to sanctify us, it will be for our great advantage. What can be more comfortable than to have the guilt of our sins expiated, and heaven opened to us? What can be more desirable, than to have our darkness scattered, and to be led in the way to everlasting life? What can conduce more to our inward peace, than to have our corruptions subdued,

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dued, and to be freed from the law of sin and death? When we receive Christ in all his offices, it will redound to the glory of God; when we accept of him to satisfy for our sins, we glorify God's justice, which we have provoked; when we comply with his precepts, we exalt God's holiness, which we have vilified and reproached; and when we bring our corruptions to be subdued by his power, we magnify the sovereignty and righteous authority of God, which we have slighted and disparaged. If then we would be wise, to act for our own profit, or faithful, to shew forth God's glory, we must receive Christ, by faith, in all his offices.

To the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, three Persons, but the one true God, the one object of our faith and hope, be honour and glory ascribed, now, henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

P A R T

PART THE SECOND.

OF THE

AUTHOR

OF

SAVING FAITH.

MAN, when he came first pure out of his Maker's hand, was an excellent creature, whether we consider him as to his body or his soul; as to his body, there was strength in his limbs, and comeliness in his frame; and had he continued in honour, youthful beauty would for ever have bloomed in his face, and neither age nor sickness would have marr'd his noble form; his soul bore the image of God, which was the greatest glory of innocent nature; the likeness of his mighty Maker shone forth in wisdom, truth, and severe and pure sanctity; no disorderly passions raged in his unruffled breast, and no uneasy cares disturb'd his quiet thoughts.

Thus

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Thus happy were our great progenitor, and our general mother, whilst, without sin, they strayed in the peaceful bowers, and the pleasant groves of Eden; but when, by grasping at the knowledge of more than God had been pleased to reveal, they provoked him to cast them out of his delightful garden, as they lost all happiness, so they brought on themselves and their posterity the greatest misery. When man had transgressed the law of his God, he was in a forlorn and helpless condition, and which way soever he turned his thoughts, he could not meet with any agreeable prospect: If he looked within, he could only discover a sea of lust and corruptions, the unruly waves of which, with a violent motion, dash'd against and encounter'd one another, to the disturbing his peace, and destroying his quiet: If he cast his eye forward, he could have no other view than of a bottomless gulph of eternal misery, where he could expect no society, but that of rebel fiends, the prince of whom had enticed him to choose his own ruin; if he ventured any ways to behold that God, whose smiles once refreshed him, and whose blessings followed him, he could only see him as a wrathful judge, with frowns covering his face, and with instruments of death filling his almighty hand: He could not in the least hope for mercy, 'till a Saviour was revealed to him, in the promise of the seed of the woman; and it was only by faith in this promised

misericord Redeemer, that he could be saved from the misery he had brought upon himself. All the descendents from the first Adam are in a state of condemnation, 'till they rely on Christ by faith; and this faith is not from themselves, neither is it a flower growing in nature's garden, but is wrought in them by the energy of the Holy Spirit, and is planted by his powerful hand. It is vain for sinners to fancy, they can believe when they will, and can at pleasure betake themselves to a Saviour; a divine work must pass upon them, before they can believe in the name of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, and the only Redeemer of men.

C H A P. I.

Of the Inability of Sinners to work Faith in themselves.

SOME of the graces which must be found in a Christian, as for instance the grace of love or fear, are only the natural affections of the soul rectified and refined; but in the several faculties of the soul of a sinner there is no foundation for faith. Was there any thing in man that could farther his faith, it must be his knowledge; but the wisdom of a natural man is so far from being subservient to faith, that it is a hindrance to it,

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it, and a sinner must die to all conceits of his understanding, before he will believe in Christ. God has ^a declared that he will destroy the knowledge of the wise, and bring to nought the understanding of the prudent, and will make foolish the wisdom of this world; and his design in doing thus, is to save the souls of the wise and prudent. The opinionated conceit sinners have of their own wisdom must be thrown down, before they will believe, because their unsanctified knowledge serves only to puff them up; and when they are blown up with pride, it cannot be thought they will believe, because the spirit of self-flattery is inconsistent with faith. When God brings sinners to believe, who are knowing and learned, he abases them to the dust, fills them with shame, and brings them to own that what they formerly reckoned the foolishness of God is more exquisite reason, than the fantastic wisdom of the most intelligent men. No sinners are so deeply humbled, as men of the most refined reason, and the strongest intellectuals, when they come to believe; because God will have the idol of their wisdom under his feet, which they almost deify in their unconverted state.

Unsanctified wisdom leads natural men to reject the mystery of a crucified Christ; for the wisdom of God in saving sinners by Christ

^a 1 Cor. i. 29, 30.

is not agreeable to the notions of natural men, tho' they are persons of the clearest heads, and the most elevated conceptions: When they come under the teachings of Christ, they must alter their methods of judging of spiritual things, and casting by the prejudices wherewith they have been long swayed, they must sit at Christ's feet, humbly to receive the law from his mouth.

It will appear impossible for men to work faith in themselves, if we consider the account the Scripture has given us of the natural state of men. This was painted in the blackest colours, by the apostle^b Paul, when he wrote thus to the Christians at Ephesus, "You were dead in trespasses and sins, in which in time past you walked, agreeably to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience; among whom we all had our conversation in times past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as others: But God who is rich in mercy, according to the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, — by grace are you saved, thro' faith, and that is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." If all men by nature

^b Ephes. ii. 1—5, 8.

are children of wrath, dead in sins, vassals to lust, and slaves to Satan, if God quickens them when they are dead, and saves them, in the way of free grace, and if when they are saved thro' faith, that faith is not of themselves, but is his free gift, it would be monstrously ridiculous to say, they can work faith in themselves, or be in the least assisting to it.

All men are naturally under the power of unbelief, they are shut up in it as a prison: The apostle ^c Paul has declared concerning sinners, that " God has shut them all up in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all : " All sinners are shut up in unbelief, that God may have mercy on all sorts of transgressors, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, whom he brings to believe in Christ. As long as sinners are in the prison of unbelief, they know not their way out, and so being without a principle of spiritual life, they are so manacled by sin that they cannot stir; therefore it is great love in God to open the prison doors, to say to such as sit in darkness, come forth, and to work faith in them. If all men by nature are shut up in unbelief, it can never be imagined they can believe of themselves, or that the grace of faith can be wrought in them, by their own power and wisdom.

There are instances in Scripture of faith being wrought in such a way, as shews it to

^c Rom. xi. 32.

be impossible it should be by man's power; one eminent instance is that of the greatest mere man that has been since the fall, the apostle Paul, who thus related the matter, in his ^dpolite and nerveful address to king Agrippa, "As I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief-priests, at mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round me, and them that accompanied me in my journey, and when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking to me in Hebrew, Saul, Saul; why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks; and I said, Who art thou Lord; and he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest, but rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared to thee for this very purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness of the things thou hast seen, and of other things as to which I will appear to thee; delivering thee from the people and the Gentiles, to whom I now send thee; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among such as are sanctified, by faith in me." There was no circumstance attending the apostle Paul, which could contribute towards working faith in him; he was breathing revenge and slaughter against

* Acts xxvi. 12—18. See also ix. 3—8. xxii. 6—11.

the church of Christ, and was so far from having any inclinations to his service, that he hated his name; but when the just one whom he persecuted, appeared to him, cloathed with a majestic glory, that exceeded the sun in brightness, he wrought faith in him, and commissioned him to preach the Gospel; and then in a moment he, who thought he never could do enough against the interest of Christ, was brought to make a full surrender of himself to him.

Another wonderful instance of faith being wrought by a supernatural power is that of the jaylor. The evangelist Luke's relation of this remarkable transaction is to this effect: The apostle Paul, and some companions in the work of the Gospel, continuing at Philippi some time, used to frequent a place by a river side, which was set apart by the Jews for prayer; one time as they were going, they met a young woman possessed by an evil spirit, who brought much gain to those who had the care of her by magic; she following Paul and his companions, cried out, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew to us the way of salvation." The apostle was incensed at the insolence of the impure spirit, that he should commend the Gospel, in order to disgrace it; and to shew he had no correspondence with him, turning about said, "I

• Acts xvi. 12—40.

command

command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her." The rebel spirit overawed with the terror of that great name, left his possession at the apostle's command. This miracle was so far from having any good effect on those who made profit of this unhappy person, that incensed at the loss of their unjust gains, they raised the mob against the apostle and the evangelists, and laying hold on Paul and Silas, carried them, after much abuse offered to them, before the magistrates, who having ordered their^f cloaths to be tore off, rashly & caused them to be scourged, and

^f Οἱ στρατηγοὶ περιρρήξαντες αὐτῶν τὰ ἱμάτια, ἐκέλευον ραβδίζειν, v. 22.

This may receive some light from the following Passages.

Οἱ διαρρήδην μεμαρτυρηκασιν ὁρῶν ὑπὸ Κόναντος τυπώμενον ἑμὲ καὶ δαιμάτιον ἐκδιδόμενον. Demosthenes c. Conon. p. 1113. Edit. Francf.

Τοῖς ραβδόχοις ἐκέλευσαν τὴν ἐσθῆτά τε περικαταρρήξαι, καὶ τοῖς ραβδοῖς τὸ σῶμα ζαίνειν. Dionys. Halicarn. Antiq. lib. ix. c. 39. p. 596. Ed. Par. 570. Ed. Oxon.

Vestimenta detrahi imperavit, virgisque multum cecidit, A. Gellius lib. I. c. 13.

Tunicam detrahi ob nescio quod delictum, caedique eum loro jussit. Id. ibid. c. 26.

& In this they rendered themselves obnoxious to punishment, since Paul and Silas were free citizens of Rome, and it was by law forbid to scourge any Roman citizen uncondemn'd.

Porcia lex sola pro tergo civium lata videtur, quod gravi poena si quis verberasset necassetve civem Romanum, sanxit. Livius, lib. x. c. 9. Vol. I. p. 846. Ed. Gron.

Quamobrem in sententiam non addidisti, uti prius verberibus in eos animadverteretur? An quia lex Porcia vetat? At aliae leges, item condemnatis civibus animam non eripi, sed exilium permitti jubent. Sallust. Bell. Catilin. c. 50. p. 160, 161. Ed. Wasse.

An de civibus Romanis contra legem Porciam verberatis, aut necatis plura dicenda sunt? Cicero pro C. Rabirio c. 3. Vol. III. p. 556, 566. Ed. Graev.

committed to prison, charging the jaylor to keep them^h safely; he took care to thrust them into an inner dungeon, and put their feet into the stocks. Whilst they were in this wretched plight, comforts divine refreshed their souls, and caused them to break forth into loud and chearful songs of praise. God was pleased to appear for his suffering servants, and caused a great earthquake, which shook the foundations of the prison, threw open all the doors, and loosed every prisoner's bands; the jaylor being awaked by the noise, and seeing the prison open, in his first hurry drew his sword to destroy himself; but upon Paul's assuring him none of his prisoners were gone, he raised his anxious mind to better thoughts, which, with trembling, he vented in a most seasonable question, "What shall I do to be saved?" To which he received this answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." This exhortation was blessed to him and his family, and he and they believed, and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God. In this account the wonders of divine grace appear, in that the jaylor, who seems to have been forward enough to obey, and even exceed the unjust commands of the magi-

^h That on occasion they might be forth coming; which matter is thus expressed by Lyfius the orator.

Σάτυρος — βελιύων ἔπεισε τὴν βελὴν, ὁσάντες αὐτὸν παραδόναι τῇ δικαστηρίῳ. Lyfius Orat. xxix. p. 452. Edit. Hanov.

strates, was brought, in a humble manner, to ask advice of those whom he had cruelly used; and we may easily gather, that the faith which was wrought in him was not from his own power, but was a supernatural work; for drawing his sword to murder himself was no preparative for believing; his faith was from God's being pleased to work by the word of exhortation given by the apostle; and he had great occasion to rejoice in the divine goodness, tho' no manner of reason to be lifted up at any thing in himself.

C H A P. II.

Of the Holy Spirit's working Faith in Sinners.

THE holy Scriptures assure us, that the grace of faith, whereby a sinner is raised to a spiritual life in Christ, is the work of God; hence saving faith is stiled, by the apostle^a Paul, "faith of the operation of God, who raised Christ from the dead." God is the sole worker of faith, and he works like a God, employing no less than his infinite and almighty power to create it in the soul of a sinner. This power bears a proportion to that which raised Christ from the dead; God

^a Col. ii. 12.

wrought mightily when he raised Christ from the dead, and he acts the same power, when he gives birth and life to the grace of faith in the heart of a sinner.

Faith is the free gift of God, who gives Christ to sinners, and for his sake gives them faith to believe in a Redeemer; this we are expressly told by the apostle ^b Paul, in these words, "To you it is freely given, for Christ's sake,——to believe in him." The same inspir'd writer has assured us, that as the whole of our salvation is by grace, so faith is not from ourselves, but is the gift of God, when he^c said, "By grace are you saved, thro' faith, and that is not from yourselves; it is the gift of God." The whole fabric of our salvation is not of works, but of pure grace; and faith itself, by which we are united to Christ, the great undertaker for us, and whereby we receive the atonement, which he as our Redeemer has made to God, is not from ourselves, but as it is a part of our salvation, it is the gift of God, as much as the happiness of heaven. Faith is God's free gift to sinners, therefore without the greatest injury done to God, it cannot be said to be the sinful creature's own act.

In some sense, and in some respects, the three divine persons work together, in order-

^b Ἰμὶν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπερ Χριστοῦ — τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεῦν. Phil. ii. 29.

^c Τῇ χάριτι ἔσεσθε σωσμένοι, διὰ τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆτο ἔκ ἐξ ὑμῶν ὅς τὸ δῶρον. Ephes. ii. 8.

ing what relates to our happiness, but on other accounts, some things are peculiar to each. By voluntary agreement the Sacred Three take different parts in the œconomy of our salvation, the Father sustains the character of supreme judge and lawgiver, the Son has fulfilled the work of redemption, and appears at the right-hand of God to plead for sinners, and the Holy Spirit applies to sinners the benefits purchased by Christ, and works all grace in them, to fit them for eternal glory. Seeing the Spirit works all grace, if faith is the work of God, he must be the immediate efficient of it; and that he is so, Christ himself has positively declared in these ^d words, "When the Comforter is come, he shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me". It is the Spirit's work to convince of the sin of unbelief, and to work faith in Christ in the hearts of such as cannot do it themselves, and he is fit for this great undertaking, because he is infinite in wisdom, and almighty in power.

The Spirit of God, in working faith in the heart of a sinner, convinces him of his sinful state, and particularly of the sin of his nature; he may not do this always first, but he does it at one time or other: When he deals with persons who have had the reins laid upon their necks, and have been suffered to run as far in the extremes of wickedness as they could, he

^d John xvi. 8, 9.

usually wounds their conscience, by convincing them of some gross sin in their lives, whereof they have been guilty, and by degrees leads them to the sin of their nature; but when he lays persons under convictions, who from their infancy have been trained up in the profession of the Gospel, and having been accustomed to the rules of sobriety and civility, have been retrenched of some superfluities; he commonly first convinces them of original sin, and from the root leads them to look with a penitent eye on the branches, or the sins of their lives. Every sinner in whom the Spirit works faith, is brought to see the corruption of his nature, which is the root of all mischief, the spring of all wickedness, the sink of all impurity, and the unclean fountain from whence all the polluted streams of actual transgressions flow; the Spirit opens his heart, and leads him from one chamber of lustful imagery to another, 'till he brings him to know what treasures of sin are laid up in it. The natural conscience of a man, when it makes the greatest stir against actual sins, still leaves him ignorant of the sin of his nature, but the Spirit lets him see the depths of sin in his heart, as well as the rivulets of actual transgressions which flow thro' his life, and convinces him of the secret pride and wickedness of his mind, which makes him bear the nearest likeness to the author of evil, as well as of the impure works of the flesh, which carry a

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conformity to unreasonable brutes. In a special manner the Spirit makes a sinner asham'd of his peculiar iniquity, or of that sin to which he is most strongly addicted, and he causes a breach where the league is most entire, and the union closest: Original sin is equal in all sinners, but in every man there is some sin or other, which is the devil's strong hold, against which the Spirit directs his greatest force, and when he has level'd Satan's main fort, he demolishes all other sins which are his out-works; the Spirit's sword cuts with the keenest edge in the tenderest part of corrupt nature, and the more endeared it is to a sinner, with the greater severity he treats it: He makes sin exceeding evil in the sinner's eye, when he presents it to his view in its proper frightful colours; then the transgressor sees it to be an injury to a gracious God, ingratitude to a most bountiful benefactor, dissingenuity to a merciful father, disloyalty to a faithful and just governor, and a spear thrust into the heart of Christ; he is sensible it is the breach of a most righteous law, and preferring a base perishing lust before the blessed and incorruptible Creator; and he is satisfied it is grieving the best friend, to pleasure the worst enemy; when he views sin in this light, it becomes exceeding evil to him; and he is ready to say, My nature is depraved, how can it be renewed? My life is full of sin, by what power can I be sanctified? Sin is become exceeding evil

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to me, who can cover its deformity, and free me from its dominion?

On a sinner's being convinced of his sinful state, the Spirit strikes him with a sense of his guilt, and shews him his misery; he is then ready to say, I am guilty because I am full of sin, and as I am guilty, I am miserable, deserving to be overtaken by wrath. When sinners are wrought upon by the Spirit, they stand speechless before God, and have not the least thought of glorying in the flesh; they are far from offering any thing in their own vindication, but humbly confess their desert of eternal punishment: When once their inward pollutions are set in order before their eyes, and the beautiful disguise which sin wore is tore off, they stand astonished at their folly, which has brought them under the miserable necessity of being damned to all eternity, and raking up their dwelling with everlasting burnings, without they have a Saviour to undertake their rescue.

When the Holy Spirit works faith in a sinner, he reveals to him the righteousness of Christ, and shews him the absolute necessity he is under to depend on it: As he brings him to see that Christ has cast out the devil, destroyed his power, bruised him under his feet on the cross, and ratified the sentence of his condemnation, so he convinces him of the insufficiency of his own righteousness, and of the need of a better righteousness to justify him,

him, which can be no other than that of Christ; the perfection of which is proved from his resurrection and glorious ascension; for if Christ had not perfectly fulfilled all required of him, heaven would not have receiv'd him, seeing no deceiver can ever meet with admittance into the happy regions above. When the Spirit convinces sinners how necessary it is for them to rely on Christ's righteousness, he does it powerfully, for he makes them unsatisfied with their present condition, and restless 'till they look after a Redeemer; he does not leave them to spiritless unactive desires, and cold faint wishes, but he compels and draws them, to look from under the burden of sin, to him who was wounded for transgression, and bruised for iniquity: He brings a sinner to say, I am a guilty creature, and obnoxious to the anger and displeasure of my offended Creator, and if the righteousness of Christ is not imputed to me, I must be condemned for ever. When the Spirit has thus given a sinner a sight of Christ's righteousness, and shewed him how necessary it is for him to depend on it, for life and salvation, he at the same time draws him, by a sprightly efficacious touch on his heart, to accept of it: He then says, I am miserable, but Christ is merciful; I am sinful, but he is gracious; I am unclean, but he is perfectly holy; I am unjust, and ought to be condemned, but he is righteous, and can justify me? I

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have nothing to recommend me to God, but he can render me acceptable to my judge; to him therefore will I go, in him will I put my trust, and in his merit will I stand before the judgment seat. When once a sinner is convinced of his sinful, guilty and miserable condition, and sees a righteousness to justify him no where but in Christ, he hastens to him by faith, and is joined to him, resolving that on him only he will rely, and that to him only he will look.

C H A P. III.

Of the Power put forth by the Holy Spirit, when he works Faith in the Heart of a Sinner.

WHEN the Spirit works faith, he casts down all the carnal reasonings which prevail in the heart of a sinner, and consequently must know his thoughts, and so be infinite in knowledge; and he changes the bent of his resolutions, from being set on exalting himself, and depending on his own righteousness; to submit to the righteousness of Christ; this is a work of almighty power. According to the œconomy of salvation, the working faith, and every other grace is devolved, in a peculiar manner, on the Holy Spirit; he works as he pleases, and when he
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Part II. OF SAVING FAITH. III

operates savingly, he does his work in an irresistible manner; he puts forth almighty power in working faith, for were his might limited, it could scarce be, but that other power might clog, if not frustrate his designs; but if we suppose him almighty, nothing can hinder his completing his design; he can cast down every mountain of opposition which is thrown in his way, he can lay low every high thing, he can demolish all the strong holds of unbelief, he can bring the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and he can cause such as are without faith, to believe in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

The Holy Spirit, in working faith in a sinner, plucks him from under the imperious power of carnal reasonings; every sinner is led aside by such corrupt reasonings as exalt his imagined self-sufficiency, and sooth his inbred pride; and they will never stoop, 'till they are thrown down by the Holy Spirit. When grace begins to attack a sinner, it finds his corrupt reason as it were in arms, making the greatest opposition to the Gospel, therefore the Spirit lays siege to his false reasonings, which like strong holds are raised to obstruct his operations, and by his infinite power lays them level with the very ground. All the corrupt imaginations, which blow up the minds of sinners with high conceits of their own excellence, must be scattered, otherwise saving faith cannot be wrought in their hearts.

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Every sinner, as long as he is left to himself, has a high conceit of his own wisdom, therefore all the corrupt reasonings, which arise up in his mind, must be pulled down, when the grace of faith is wrought in him. Opinionated sinners are apt to imagine themselves sufficiently wise, and they are impatient of being controlled: Many men are not indeed advanced so far in confidence and blasphemy, as to say, they are as wise as God, yet they come very near it, when they talk of the infallibility of human reason, and take upon them to arraign the proceedings of their Maker: Did not this atheistical conceit, that they are able to direct the most High, find too much refuge in the hearts of vain men, why should they be so forward, to set their distracted phantasies on a level with the dictates of God's infinite wisdom? Why should they be so much for prescribing their feeble fancies, as a directory to him in the proceedings of his providence? And why do they so often saucily reject his revelations, and the methods of his infallible understanding, when they cannot plumb them by the short line of their perplexed reasonings? We should never be so troubled with hearing the cavils of infidelity, were it not for proud conceited creatures imagining they are fit to direct even the most High. It was a very ancient observation, * that " Vain man would

* Job. xi. 12.

fain be wise, tho' he is born like the wild ass's colt;" and this proud conceit of our own wisdom is at the bottom of all unbelief, and is the cause of all our murmuring under dark dispensations. Why do we not believe what God has revealed, but because we fancy we know better? Why do we not obey the divine precepts, which are express and plain, without intricacy or obscurity, but because we suppose ourselves able to judge what is fit to be done by us? Why do we repine under dark mysterious providences, but because we imagine God would act wisely, should he only do as we would have him? The tendency of all the reasonings which are naturally in the understanding of a sinner, is to make him judge the way of God to be folly, and to induce him to think he can find out a good way of his own to walk in. It must then be a work of great power, for the Spirit to strip a sinner of the high conceit of his own wisdom, which in his degenerate state is become natural to him. The wise man has told^b us, that if we could "bray a fool in a mortar, his folly would not depart from him;" were he pounded even to dust, could his dislocated parts be re-united, and life return into him, without a fresh putting forth of almighty power, his folly would not leave him: As this is true of folly in worldly affairs, so it is

^b Prov. xxvii. 22.

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more true of folly in spiritual matters, for no folly sticks so close, as the misgrounded opinion a sinner has of his own wisdom; therefore it is a mighty power which the Spirit puts forth, when he roots this folly out of the heart; and by working faith brings a man to have low thoughts of his own understanding, and to count the way of God to be the most perfect wisdom, which before he looked upon to be mere folly.

Men who are tied down under unbelief, are dissatisfied with the way of salvation revealed in the Gospel; therefore all the false reasonings, which they advance against it, must be cast down by the Spirit, when he works faith. Sinners naturally refuse to believe the revelation of the Gospel, because they do not find in it such marks as suit their prejudiced fancies; and tho' they may appear to have such favourable inclinations, and to be of such good natural dispositions, as to make persons hope they are not far from the kingdom of heaven, yet they may be in as remote a distance from it, as the most impolished transgressors, because they may harbour in their minds a number of false reasonings against the way of salvation, contrived by infinite wisdom, and revealed in the Gospel of peace. The strictest devotionists among the Jews, who were of a pharisaic stamp, perished, as well as the most profligate wretches amongst the rude vulgar, because they were

too wise in their own conceits, to submit to the righteousness of him, whom the Gospel revealed to be the God and Saviour of men: And many sinners may be found, who seem not void of candor and ingenuity, who when they are pressed to receive the Gospel, tho' they do not with scorn reject it, yet cannot find in their hearts to take one step in the way of life; the reason is, they think meanly of the method of salvation, because it does not in all things quadrate with their pre-conceived opinions, and something is enjoined to all who come to a Saviour, that does not please their mistaken fancies. Some would follow Christ, but they must carry with them their riches and profits, and must still enjoy their pleasures and endeared lusts; others are for seeking the kingdom of God, and for giving themselves up to a contemplative life, but they must settle some other matters first; and others will not appear to be against minding the one thing necessary, but they think it may be better done hereafter. Let the temper of sinners be ever so different, they are not for being saved in the way God has appointed, because it agrees not with their humours; and their prejudices are never rooted out, 'till the Holy Spirit makes his entry into their souls by his almighty power, and reconciles them to the doctrine of the Gospel. When this is done, a sinner is so far from daring to capitulate with Christ, that he makes

an entire surrender of himself to him, and is content to be carried whithersoever he pleases: He does not pretend to say, Lord, I am free to follow thee, if I may do this or that, and may retain such and such enjoyments; but he cries out, Thou sovereign arbiter of my life, and guide of all my ways, whatever thou wilt have me to do, I will perform, in thy strength; thou author of all good, and purchaser of all happiness, give me what thou hast promised, and command me what thou pleasest.

The Holy Spirit, when he works the grace of faith in the heart of a sinner, crucifies him to all the apprehensions he has of his own fulness. One of the first things taught sinners is spiritual poverty; they must be drained of all swelling thoughts of their supposed fulness, before a blessing can come upon them from the Lord, and the kingdom of heaven can be theirs. When men are savingly convinced, they are no longer disposed to glory in the flesh, and they are inflamed with a warm sprightly zeal to glorify God; their proud nature is hurled down, and all their high imaginations stoop before the footstool of Christ; to him they are obedient, they are content to receive all from him, and are willing to sacrifice all for him; whereas, as long as they are guided by corrupt reason, they cannot endure to be taught self-denial; nor will they submit to it, 'till the Spirit overwhelms

whelms them with a storm of convictions, and by his almighty power, throws down all the lofty towers, and strong bulwarks of proud imagination.

Faith is the constituent and essential part of a Christian, but it finds not one fragment of corrupt nature, to set its foot upon, because the proud reason of a sinner is opposite to faith; and 'till the Spirit of God casts the sinner down from the pinnacle of his self-exalting thoughts, into the pit of self-abasement, faith can find no room in his heart: He advances his dreams against the wisdom of God, he has a rooted prejudice against the way of salvation made known in the Gospel, and he exalts himself against Christ, and is full in his own esteem: It must then be a great power, that brings him to count his own wisdom foolishness, to receive the revelation which before he rejected, and to bow at Christ's feet, and become nothing in his own eyes, that he may be exalted. In short, it is the almighty power of the Holy Spirit, that brings a sturdy conceited sinner to renounce his wisdom, that he may learn Christ, to receive tamely the mysteries of the Gospel, and to throw away all opinions of his own worth.

The Holy Spirit farther manifests his power when he works faith, by beating a sinner off from all the deluding apprehensions he has of his own righteousness. Every natural man is alive to himself; his imaginary righte-

ousness he counts his glory, and he must die to all conceit of it, before he can be content to have this idol demolished. The smart of the sharpest afflictions, and the dread of the blackest terrors, cannot drive him from this false refuge, nor can any thing make him die to his own righteousness, but the command applied to the conscience, by the force of the Spirit's mighty arm. The great apostle Paul spoke thus of himself, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died:" As long as the apostle was without the spiritual knowledge of the law, in its purity and extent, he thought himself alive, and looked upon his condition to be safe, and conscience gave him no trouble; and it must be owned, that he had much more to lift him up, than others who imitate him in nothing, but presumptuous confidence; for ^d he was a great proficient in morality, and wanted no external privileges: He was of the genuine stock of Israel, and of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee by sect, and a strict observer of the law; he was not without zeal for his religion, but for the maintaining it, persecuted the church; and he was not to be taxed with outward defilements, for touching the righteousness of the law he was blameless; by his legal stock of good works he lived, and thought to keep

^c Rom. vii. 9.

^d Phil. iii. 4, 5, 6.

up his reputation with God, and to get to heaven by his duties and performances; but when once the commandment was powerfully applied to his conscience, sin revived: When he perceived the law to be perfect, apprehended its spiritual meaning and full extent, and saw that it condemned proud thoughts, as well as grossly immoral actions, he had such a lively sense of guilt imprinted on his soul, as he never felt before; then the law shewed him the degeneracy of his nature, and the carnality of his mind; and sin, which was once dead, and out of sight, drew a new breath, and presented itself to his view, covered with all its hideous, loathsome deformities; upon the revival of sin in his soul he immediately died to his own righteousness, in point of trust; he lost the ungrounded confidence which formerly he had, and fell under a conviction, that he was in a state of eternal death, that there was no safety for his soul upon any legal foundation, and that his duties could never bring him to heaven; then he could, with satisfaction, make this^e noble declaration, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; nay doubtless I count all things but loss, for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung, that I may win

^e Philip. iii. 7—11.

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Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death, if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead."

It is hard for a sinner to cast away his lusts, but it is harder for him to throw off all trust in his duties and sincerity; for natural conscience will rebuke him for the violent eruptions of lust, but it will not drive him from relying on his performances; therefore a greater degree of power is necessary, to make him cease from trusting in his sincerity and obedience, than to separate him from the commission of scandalous sins; seeing the opinionated fancy he has of his own worth is natural to him. Every one who has made a progress in the formality of a Pharisaic reformation, is alive in his own eyes, but when the commandment comes, and convinces him that, notwithstanding all his outward purgations, he is in a state of condemnation, because of his inward spiritual lusts, sin appears afresh against him, and upon its revival he dies to himself; and then all his moral excellencies, which were once amiable in his view, and of which he was proud, become every way contemptible, and his duties wherein he trusted are

strip'd of their fair outside, and are no more to him than rotten idols gilded over. The commandment being armed with the mighty power of the Spirit, breaks into the soul of a sinner, carrying with it such a light as shews him, how foolish and unreasonable it is for him to trust in an imperfect righteousness, and brings him to compare himself with the righteousness and holiness of God; and then he can see nothing in himself that can bear any proportion to the infinite purity of God: When the Spirit enters into his soul, with a strong hand and a conquering arm, and brings him to see his own emptiness, he is taken entirely off from trusting in his obedience; before this he could talk in a confident strain, and say, God I thank thee, I am not as other gross transgressors, I am alive, and shall go to heaven; but now, the Spirit having demolished his opinion of his own righteousness, he speaks in a mournful rueful dialect, and cries out, I am spiritually dead, and must die for ever, if I have not an interest in Christ. It is a great power which brings a sinner to die to his own righteousness, of which he had such high conceits before, and induces him to rely altogether in Christ.

After the Holy Spirit has, with a mighty energy, brought a sinner off from trusting in himself, he farther exerts his power in bringing him to venture his soul only on the righteousness of Christ. It is no small degree of power

er to bring a despairing sinner, who is convinced he is less than nothing in himself, to believe himself to be rich in Christ; and it carries a great difficulty in it, to work faith in a man, when he has a burden of guilt lying upon him, and has such an insight into his natural condition, as brings him to despair of whatever he has, or can be supposed to have. As all afflictions and legal terrors can never bring a person to die to the opinion he has entertained of his own righteousness, without the concurrence of the Spirit's almighty power, so when he is once dead to this, it is only the same power can inspire him with the life of faith; without this, were he to perform thousands of duties, he could neither live by them, nor draw comfort from them; hence the apostle Paul said[†] thus, "I thro' the law am dead to the law, that I may live to God." And every one who is rightly convinced, can say after this great proficient in Christian knowledge, to this purpose; by the full application of the law to my conscience, I am dead to trusting in all the duties of it, and I can no more now raise my hope upon them; and the reason why I am dead, thro' the law, to all the duties I can perform, is, I have now learned to live to God, by faith in Christ. When a sinner is dead in his own esteem, and is under the weight of guilt, no-

[†] Gal. ii. 19.

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thing can raise him, and cause him to awake and shew himself, but the power of the Spirit, who calls the things that are not, as tho' they were, who can give him a sight of Christ, and a sense of forgiveness; neither can anything put life into him, but the knowledge of a pure unmixed gospel of grace, and the application of Christ and his benefits.

We may the better judge of the difficulty of bringing a sinner to believe, when he is enabled to die both to sin and to his own righteousness, if we consider what depths of despondency, such as are actually united to Christ, and justified by his righteousness, fall into, and how hard they find it to exercise faith, in the renewed acts of it. The great difficulty of acting faith has on its side, by way of evidence, the experience of all believers. Of this we may take an instance in the Psalmist Heman, who was so wise a man, that it was judged a great embellishment of the character of Solomon, the wisest mere man that ever was, to say, he ^{was} wiser than all men, even than Heman; he also appears, by his short Psalm, to have been a great saint, and a strong believer; yet this excellent man

* God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand on the sea shore; and Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all those of the East countrey, and all the wisdom of Egypt, for he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol and Darda the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the nations round about, 1 Kings iv. 29, 30, 31.

of

of God found it difficult to renew the acts of his faith, and put questions, which nothing inferior to omnipotence can baffle or answer; whilst under his weight of cares, he addressed himself to him who hears the sighing of the prisoners, in the following^a inimitably elegant and moving manner, "O Jehovah, the God of my salvation, let my prayer come before thee, incline thy ear to my cry, for my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave; I am as one free among the dead, like the slain that lie buried in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, and in the deeps; thy wrath lies hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead, shall the dead rise and praise thee? Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark, and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? But to thee have I cried, O Lord." As this disconsolate saint, when God's fierce wrath went over him, and when because of his terrors he was distracted, applied himself for relief to him who inflicted his wound, and sought to his power to be restored; so every believer, when he is wounded in spirit, looks for healing to the almighty power of the Spirit, who can

^a Psalm lxxxviii. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13.

strengthen

strengthen the bruised reed of his weak faith, and rekindle the flame of his expiring love. A desponding Christian may say after Heman to this purpose : O God of my life, I am in some measure like them who are in hell, for I am pierced thro' with the guilt of my sins, and with a fresh sense of thy severest wrath in my conscience : Shall I ever rise out of this self-condemned state, to see myself to be in thy favour, and enjoy the sunshine of thy love, that with praises I may speak of the great and wonderful things thou hast done for me ? Shall ever the bright beams of thy smiling face descend into the low pit of the grave, or pierce the dark cell of despondency where I now sit ? Shall thy faithfulness to verify thy word of promise, and to save such as trust in thee, appear to me, who am tempted to judge myself to be between the teeth of the destroyer ? Wilt thou declare thy faithfulness to me in destruction ? If thou dost this, it will be a standing wonder of thy power, as great an instance of thy divine energy, as if thou wast to raise up one who has been long dead, or to reunite the scattered parts of one who has been tore in pieces, and utterly destroyed. Shall I ever see the clear light rending the gloom which is now before my eyes, or behold the beauty of redemption in the darkness where I now sit ? Shall my wither'd dying faith, which is panting for breath, and at the last gasp, be recruited and quickened,

to

to take hold of the righteousness of my Saviour, in this solitary land of forgetfulness, where I dwell in silence, like one dead, who is forgot and gone, who will no more be seen, or spoke of? Yet I have an opportunity still to invoke thee, O Spirit of truth, the comforter of such as are cast down; if thou wilt restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and turn this forlorn and gloomy vale of my present trouble into a door of hope, thou wilt shew thyself to be the author of mercy, and the God of love, whose right hand is glorious in power, and excellent in might. All Christians, when they are in a desponding fit, are ready to own, that no less power can put a new vigour into their staggering faith, than what can raise the dead, bring back to life such as are mouldering in the grave, and retrieve such as are in the jaws of the destroyer.

If almighty power is requisite to put spirits into the flagging faith of a Christian, certainly no less, but the same acted in a more eminent manner, must be necessary to work the principle of faith, and to give it a beginning in a sinner. If a Christian in desertion, who can never be without the habit, root, and seed of faith, finds it difficult to act faith anew, on that Christ in whom he has already believed, and in whose arms he has reposed himself, what a great power must it be to bring a sinner to act faith on that Jesus, in whom he never yet believed? Seeing it is like the raising

a man from the dead, to bring a bemisted soul to exert that principle of faith which he has in possession, what power must be required, to bring a person to act faith on Christ, who has no principle at all? All Christians find it a most difficult duty to believe in Christ, tho' they have the word and Spirit, to seal up to them the truth and merit of Christ's sufferings, tho' they have the pressing sense of their own indigence to carry them to a Saviour, and have the tastes of his sweetness to allure them, tho' they have the testimonies of such as have gone before them, to move them to rely on him, who wrought great deliverance for others, yet they find it exceeding difficult to rest on Christ, as their Redeemer. If then it is so hard a work, for such as have faith, to renew the acts of it, certainly it must be great power to bring such to rest on a Redeemer, who are yet in their unbelief.

Sinners who never knew what it is, to see sin in its guilt, or God in his terrible wrath, are apt to have slight thoughts of believing in Christ; and are ready to fancy it is soon enough to think of this, when they are within the view of eternity; but it is strange they should suppose it is time enough to begin this great work, when their hands hang down, when their nerves shake, when their joints tremble, when their strength fails, when their eye-strings break, when their tongue falters, when their memory is gone, and when all
their

their rational powers are out of order: This is a dreadful delusion, for persons to imagine themselves fit to adjust the matter of their salvation with God, when they cannot speak rationally, it may be, to men; or to think they can take up their sins, and cast them upon Christ, when it may be they, thro' the extremity of strong pain, cannot frame one settled thought. It may be with as much wisdom imagined, that one who cannot stir hand or foot, can overturn the mountains, or rend the rocks.

A Christian, when he considers that his faith is the production of the Spirit's almighty power, will have his value of this useful and necessary grace raised; especially since, as it is wrought by a mighty power, so the fruits of it are wonderful. What great and wonderful things does a sprightly faith do in a believer? he who has true faith in Christ can look on all afflictions, and say there is not one drop of wrath in them; he can think on hell without terror, and can say, I am pardoned, and put out of the reach of vindictive justice; he can look up to heaven with comfort, and can say, all there is mine, by the Father's gift, and the Redeemer's purchase; when thousands of enemies set themselves against him, his faith causes him to lie down and sleep, because God sustains him; was the whole frame of nature to break around him, and were the strong foundations of the earth to fail, his faith would vanquish all
slavish

slavish fears, because God is a refuge and strength, and a present help in the time of trouble: When his enemies are numerous and strong, and busy to contrive his ruin, he sets his forehead like a flint, and despises their rage, because his faith looks to him who is invisible; when others, whose muddy souls are drenched in the things of sense, are afraid of them who can kill the body, he is not daunted, because his faith puts him chiefly upon fearing the eternal God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell for ever; when all his worldly comforts are blasted, and strip'd of their verdure, he is supported under the loss of them; because faith turns his eye to the glory of that inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fades not away, and feeds itself on the rich and enduring substance which is there; when all things in nature's storehouse are rendered useless to him, when the fig tree does not blossom, when there is no fruit in the vine, when the labour of the olive fails, when the fields yield no meat, when the flocks are cut off from the fold, and there are no herds in the stalls, faith opens the treasures of heaven, and he rejoices in the God of his salvation; when the brittle shell of his body is broke, and his soul must fly away to regions unseen, and be immoveably fixed in an endless eternity, his faith, upon the brink of his departure, sings a triumphant song, and says, *Tho' I walk thro' the valley of the shadow*

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dow

dow of death, I will fear no evil, because the rod and staff of my great shepherd comfort me. O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? I feel no sting in death, and see no gloom hanging over the grave: thanks to my exalted Redeemer, who gives me the conquest, who has strip'd death of its sting, and divested the grave of all its terrors: I can look upon death as the gate of heaven, and the entrance into glory and immortality; and I can commit my flesh to the grave, as a bed of rest, in hope of a joyful resurrection.

Faith is wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Holy Spirit, who therein manifests a great and a mighty degree of power; this may convince us, how false that opinion is, which supposes that sinners are brought to believe by bare moral suasion; this conceit saps the vitals of Christianity, and as it is too much become the epidemical plague of the reformed churches, it threatens their subversion, and it ought to be cautiously avoided, and zealously rejected. What men of corrupt minds call moral suasion is this; the truths of the Gospel, and the duties of religion are propounded to the understanding of a sinner, with rational motives; and weighty arguments, to incline him to embrace the truths propounded, and to perform the duties urged, while his will is left in a state of mere indifference. Thus for instance, faith in Christ is, perhaps, made known to a sinner, as a necessary duty, and it may

may be declared to him, that his advantages will be great, if he believes in a Saviour, and his misery will be unavoidable, if he persists in unbelief; however his will is not powerfully attracted, but is left indifferent, to accept or reject what is offered. This is a fair account of what some call moral suasion, and it is no more than a proposal of spiritual benefits, and a rational excitement of a sinner to his duty, but it does not put any power into him to sway his will.

It is impossible that bare moral suasion can bring a sinner to believe, because a proposal of truth to the understanding works no change upon the mind, without a power inwardly to move it, and renew it: Was the case otherwise, no reason can be given, why they to whom Christ preached did not believe: There was no defect on Christ's side, in propounding the truths which were to be believed, and in pressing the duties which were to be performed: Whose words could be more likely to make their way into the hearts of such as heard them, than the words of our Saviour? Yet the Pharisees scoffed at his admonitions, and despised his reproofs, and were as cold as ice, and as hard as stone, under his warming and melting ministry: Who ever expressed divine matters with more becoming majesty, and more affectionate elegance, than our Lord? Yet the evangelical prophet hasⁱ brought him

ⁱ Isa. xlix. 2, 4.

in making this sad complaint, "The Lord has made my mouth like a sharp sword, and made me a polished shaft, yet I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought, but surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my reward with my God." This prophetic complaint was fulfilled, when the Jews, who sat under Christ's ministry three years and a half, were not gathered in by his preaching. All the hearers of the great bishop of souls were not brought to believe, therefore the working of faith does not principally, much less only, depend upon outward exhortations, but chiefly on the inward operation of the Spirit. When a sinner believes, he is quickened, being dead before; and when he is thus revived, it is no less than the power of the eternal Spirit that puts life into him. The word sounded in the ear may gall the conscience, and cause some reflections and rational considerations, but it is the energy of the Holy Spirit that must work faith in the heart.

There cannot be a more convincing proof, that the bare proposal of truth to the understanding cannot produce faith, than the consideration of what we often see, that sinners are under the deepest convictions, know the truth, and cannot object against their duty, and yet continue in unbelief. Many of the Jews were convinced by Christ's discourses, who never believed in him; for we are^k told,

^k Mat. vii. 29.

" he

“ he taught with authority;” or his doctrine carried such a stream of evidence with it, that it bore down all the perverse reasons of stout hearted gainsayers; yet all who were convinced by his authoritative preaching, did not lay down the weapons of their warfare, and yield themselves up to his conduct. Many confessions drop’d from the Jews of the demonstrative evidence which went along with Christ’s ministry, nay some of them owned, that never ¹ man spoke as he did, and yet they persisted in their infidelity. Experience tells us, that many are under biting convictions, who never believe; for profane sinners will be so struck with a rational convincing discourse, that they will be mute for a time, and will drop all their crafty pleas for sin, and yet they are not shaken out of it. We may find backsliders, after many convictions, going on in their old way, and closely embracing that sin which the word without, and their own conscience within condemns. As this is a fearful judgment upon them, and looks as if they were forsaken of God, and given up to eternal ruin, so it is a full proof, that bare moral suasion cannot work faith, for if it could, all who are convinced would believe.

The truth is the instrument of spiritual freedom, as the revelation of it is made effectual, to scatter the ignorance of the mind, and

¹ John vii. 46.

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to cut asunder the combinations of lust in the will; therefore moral suasion must necessarily be used, and the truth must be propounded to the understanding; but it is the Spirit who makes free efficiently, or by way of special operation; for it is he delivers from blindness of mind, and hardness of heart. As he takes the righteousness of Christ, and imputes it to the person of a sinner, thereby making him free from guilt and condemnation, so he takes the purifying virtue of Christ's death, and applies it to his soul, thereby delivering him from sin in its dominion. ^m "Where the Spirit of the Lord thus is, there is liberty." It is not a man's own power that brings him to believe, and therefore it cannot be done by bare moral suasion; but when faith is wrought, besides a proposal of truth to the understanding, there must be an application of the merit of Christ to the conscience, by the special and immediate operation of the Holy Spirit.

Was it supposed, that moral suasion only could work faith in the hearts of sinners, then many gross absurdities would follow, and the sense of the most plain Scriptures must be destroyed; thus when it is said, sinners are born of God, we must understand that they beget themselves; when it is affirmed, that they are God's workmanship, we must take it, as if they made themselves new creatures; and

^m 2 Cor. iii. 17.

when

when it is declared, that Christ quickens them, we must conceive that they raise themselves. When the Holy Spirit brings a sinner to believe, if he only made a proposal of truth to the understanding, and left the will indifferently to accept or reject what is offered, Judas and Simon Magus would be as much indebted to the grace of God, as Peter or Paul; for Judas knew the truth, and was a minister to preach it, and Simon gave a notional assent to the verity of the Gospel. If no more was done for one who trusts in Christ, than propounding the truth to his mind, it would follow, that God had no more love from eternity for such as are actually saved, than for such as are the everlasting objects of his hatred; that Christ suffered, and satisfied no more for those who are in heaven, than for those who are in hell; and that the Spirit did no more for them that have actually entered into glory, than he did for them who are vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction. If no more went to work faith than moral suasion, the consequence would be, that God has left it altogether indifferent and uncertain, whether any shall be saved or no; because if he was to put forth no more power than a bare proposal of the truth, and the will was left indifferent, to accept or reject this proposal, then all sinners might do what any one sinner does, and so no sinners might be saved: This amounts to a charge

of blasphemy, as if God the Father should send his Son to suffer for sinners; as if God the Son should die to redeem them; and as if God the Spirit should strive to bring them to believe in a Saviour, and yet in the foundation of all it should be left indifferent and uncertain, whether one sinner could be saved by the death of Christ. This tends to form in us such low notions of the three divine persons, who take their several parts in the economy of our salvation, that it should fire our zeal against what is calculated to lessen our regard to them, and honour for them. If faith came only by a mere rational persuasion, then several expressions about it in the Scriptures would be only great swelling words, and such strained metaphors, as would be unworthy of the Spirit of truth. Faith could not be stiled the operation of God, if it was brought about by no more than a proposal of the truth to the understanding: And it would be improper to say, the Spirit displays his power upon us, if he did no more than exhort us to believe, and yet left us to our own corrupt wills. With these shocking absurdities is that notion big, which maintains that moral suasion is sufficient to work faith, and to convert a sinner. This notion is one principal cause of the universal decay of piety among Protestants, and it is a great bar to the conversion of sinners; for when they are soothed up, and hardened in the imaginary belief

belief of their own strength, they are laid asleep in presumption, and are encouraged to neglect a humble dependence on Christ for spiritual life. When sinners are really brought to believe, they become nothing in their own eyes, and acknowledge Christ to be all in all; and as such he must be owned, for no creature, out of a conceit of its fulness and sufficiency, must glory in his presence, but whosoever glories, must glory in the Lord.

C H A P. IV.

Of the Holy Spirit's working Faith by the Instrumentality of the Word.

THE Holy Spirit is the efficient of faith, or the internal agent that works it in the heart; but the word is the external means, or instrument he makes use of, to produce it. We must not pretend to stint the operations of the Spirit, who is a free sovereign agent, so far as to say, he never works faith without the instrumentality of the word; for he does it without the word in elect persons, who die before they are able to hear the word read or preached; and likewise in persons who are under religious impressions from their infancy, and never remember the time when they were in an unconverted state. In adult persons the Spirit mostly, if not always

works faith by the instrumentality of the Word; sometimes he blesses the reading of the Scripture for the producing of faith in the heart; and there is scarce a more remarkable instance of this, than in the noted story of the learned Junius, which can hardly be too often repeated. This excellent person^a fell, in his younger years, into the bad company of some atheistical scoffers, who tho' the very fools of nature, passed then, as they do now, for grand wits, and was in a manner seduced by them; his pious father understanding the danger he was in, sent for him home, and took care to lay a New Testament in his way; he meeting with it, carelessly opened it, and cast his eye on the beginning of the apostle John's Gospel, "In

^a In Novum Testamentum imprudens incidi, quod Pater legebat frequens, & in conclave illud subjecerat oculis meis legendum, si forte gratiam Deus hoc modo faceret, prudentissime mentem suam de me & animum suum dissimulans, ex quo lethalis impietatis illius semina, quae ante radices egerant in me, animadverterat. Hic ergo Novum illud Testamentum divinitus oblatum aperio: aliud agenti se mihi exhibet aspectu primo augustissimum illud caput Evangelistae & Apostoli, "In principio erat Verbum, & Verbum illud erat apud Deum, & Deus erat Verbum illud, hoc erat in principio apud Deum; omnia per ipsum facta sunt, & sine ipso factum est nec unum, quod factum est." Lego partem capituli, & ita commoveor legens, ut repente divinitatem argumenti scriptique majestatem auctoritatemque senserim longo intervallo omnibus eloquentiae humanae fluminibus praeceuntem. Horrebat corpus, stupebat animus, & totum illum diem sic afficiebar, ut, qui essem ipse mihi viderer incertus esse. Recordatus es mei Domine Deus mi, pro immensa misericordia tua, ovemque perditam in gregem tuam recepisti. Franciscus Junius in Vita sua.

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the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Struck with these words, he read part of the chapter; and the divinity of the argument, and the majesty and strength of the style, which was vastly above all mere human compositions, of which he was a very good judge, forced him to own, that such a writing could only come from the inspiration of God. He was so surprized and astonished, that for the whole day he scarce knew where he was; this surprize, thro' the tender mercies of his God, was made to end in sound belief, and a true conversion; and thus this wandering sheep was gathered into the fold of the great shepherd, and was fitted by the Spirit to be a champion for, and a defender of those divine truths, which he had once been too forward to ridicule and vilify.

Tho' the Holy Spirit sometimes blesses the reading of the Scriptures, for the working faith in the hearts of sinners, yet as dispensing the word of life is the means chiefly appointed to promote this end, it is mostly seen, that he honours the institution of preaching the Gospel, with making it the instrument in his hand to beget the grace of faith, in the hearts of such as are by nature unbelievers. This is proved by the apostle Paul, in the way of a beautiful gradation, in the ^b following passage,

^b Rom. x. 12, 13, 14, 15, 17.

“ There

“ There is no difference between Jew and Greek, seeing the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon him; for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved; how then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall any preach except they are sent? So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” God by his prophets promised salvation both to the Jews, and to the Gentiles; there can be no salvation without calling on him, there can be no calling on him without faith, there can be no faith without hearing, there can be no hearing without a preacher, and there can be no preacher without being sent; so that faith comes by hearing, and hearing comes by preaching the word of reconciliation. The word of God preached and heard is the instrument whereby the Spirit of God works faith; and it is no wonder that he mostly works it this way, because preaching the word is an institution of Christ, appointed for this very end and purpose. When the Spirit works faith by the word, he terrifies and breaks sinners down by the application of the threatenings of the law; and he applies the promises of the Gospel of peace, to raise up, and comfort the drooping spirits of such as he has rendered contrite.

When

When the Spirit of God works faith in the heart of a sinner, by the word, he terrifies him, and breaks him down, by the application of the threatenings of the law. When he does this, he constrains the sinner to hear what the law says to him, however unwilling he may be to listen to it. It cannot be agreeable to a sinner, to hear the voice of the law, for it curses and condemns every transgressor, and it denounces death and damnation for every breach of its precepts; for we are told 'in Scripture, that "Curled is every one that continues not in all things, which are wrote in the book of the law, to do them." The curse of the law reaches every unregenerate sinner; could a man perfectly fulfil the law, he might expect life from his obedience to the law; but the law curses every one, who continues not in all which is wrote in it. Could a man keep the whole law, except offending in one single point, he would be as really liable to the wrath of God, as if he had broke the whole law; for as every sin is a contempt of God's authority, he who breaks one precept of the law, is virtually guilty of the breach of the whole law. No man can keep the law perfectly, and against every breaker of it the curse and condemnation is thundered out. Unregenerate men are so far from breaking the law only in a single instance, or in a few

Gal. iii. 10. Deut. xxvii. 26.

points,

points, that the whole course of their lives is made up of violations of the commandments, which are holy, just, and good. Man since the fall is ^d abominable and polluted, and greedily drinks iniquity, as a thirsty man does water, he loves darkness ^e rather than light, his heart ^f is full of evil, and in his ^g flesh dwells no good thing; his errors ^h are so many, that none can count them up, his wickedness ⁱ is great, and his transgressions are in a manner numberless, they are ^k even more than the hairs that crown his head; how great a degree of wrath then does he treasure up to himself, against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God!

When the Spirit of God forcibly urges upon the conscience of a sinner, that for every breach of the law the curse is his due, and causes him to call to mind, how he has been so far from obeying what the law requires, or keeping all things contained in it, that he has broke whatever it commands, and done whatever it forbids; he is startled and affrighted, and is so far from thinking his state safe, that he looks upon himself as a person lost and undone for ever, if the curse comes upon him: He discovers a rectitude in the rule, but a crookedness in his will; he sees a per-

^d Job. xv. 16.^e Rom. vii. 18.^f Psalm xl. 12.^g John iii. 19.^h Ps. xix. 12.ⁱ Ecclef. ix. 3.^k Job xxii. 5.

fection in the law, but the highest degree of degeneracy in himself; he views a comely order in the precepts, but the greatest disorder in his spirit; he descries purity in the command, but a spring of pollution in his heart; and he is sensible there is spirituality in the directory of his actions, but enmity and carnality in his mind and thoughts. The law shews a sinner what he is, and what he ought to be; and when the Spirit holds the glass of the law to the eye of his conscience, he must view the rectitude, perfection, comely order, purity, and spirituality of the law, on the one hand, and his own crookedness, degeneracy, disorder, uncleanness, enmity, and carnality, on the other.

When the Spirit, in applying the threatenings of the law to the conscience of a sinner, makes him hear what the law says, he brings him at the same time under the pressing sense of his guilt. The Spirit is in Scripture stiled a Spirit of bondage, as he applies the law in the severity of it to a sinner: The apostle Paul ¹ mentions it as the happiness of true believers, that they receive not the Spirit, as a Spirit of bondage again to fear, but as a spirit of adoption, enabling them to call God, Father. When the Spirit is called a Spirit of bondage, this does not imply that he binds a sinner over to bondage, and brings

¹ Rom. viii. 15.

him into thralldom ; but he is so stiled, because he discovers to men the bands which lie upon their souls, and works in them horror and fear, when he opens their eyes, to see how they are in slavery to sin and Satan, and liable to divine vengeance. He discharges volleys of curses against them, musters up the judgments of God which they have deserved, flashes the fire of God's indignation in their faces, gives them a feeling sense of the weight of their iniquities, and impresses on their consciences the smarting sense of their guilt: When he shews them their sin, in its filthiness, he also shews them the wrath of God, in its dreadfulness. When sinners are lying on the bed of slothful indolence, the Spirit often suddenly breaks the bands of carnal security, which tie them down, and awakens them, to view the black scene of their guilt and iniquity ; and when they are stretched at ease in sin, he, as it were, with a rattling clap of thunder, rouzes them, to take a terrifying prospect of the wrath of God ; that so they may be brought to renounce their confederacy with death, and to break their agreement with hell, and may be induced, before it is too late, to make supplication to their judge.

When the Spirit of God works in men, as a spirit of bondage, he gives them a terrifying prospect of all the attributes of God, as they are edged with wrath, and are acting
conjunctly

conjunctly against them: He brings to their view the justice of God, proceeding to pass a sentence upon them, because it has been offended with them, and incensed against them; he manifests to them the holiness of God, preparing a charge against them, because it has been disparaged; he lays open to them the truth of God, hastening to fulfil his threatenings, because it has been disbelieved; he shews them the mercy of God, ready to join with incensed justice, in condemning them, because it has been slighted; he lets them see the very goodness of God about to shut up all bowels and tender compassions against them, because it has been despised and undervalued; he sets before them the almighty power of God, kindling a tophet of wrath for them, and prepared to cast them into it; and he presents to their thoughts the eternity and immutability of God, about to seal them up to destruction, and to perpetuate their torments. When the Spirit brings sinners to see themselves as dry stubble, incircled with the injured perfections of God, which are all flaming out to consume them, they are filled with fear, they cry out guilty before God, they make a positive conclusion against themselves, and are prepared thankfully to embrace the proposal of mercy.

When the Holy Spirit works in the hearts and consciences of men, as a Spirit of bondage, to ingender fear, and sets the law home up-

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on them, he makes it to be as their teacher, to guide and lead them to Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness, to all such as believe. When sinners are brought to view their guilt and unworthiness, in the glass of the law, they are made sensible of their inability to pay the debts they owe to God, and are convinced of the necessity they lie under to have another to answer for them, who is able to undertake their cause, and satisfy for their guilt; and their ear being thus open to discipline, when Christ is proposed to them, as a fit Mediator to manage their cause with God, they receive and embrace him as their Saviour. Hence the law is called, by the ^m apostle Paul, a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. He has told us, that "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, as it shews us our sin, threatens and condemns us for it; and convinces us, that a Mediator is necessary, to bear away our sin, to expiate our guilt, and to keep off from us deserved punishment. The law, in the hand of the Spirit, corrects us for our iniquity, and so forces us to cry out for mercy, and inclines us cheerfully to accept of it, as soon as it is offered; and it makes us smart for our prevarication, and so renders us willing to close

Gal. iii. 24.

with

with Christ, as a Saviour, whenever he is propounded to us.

When the Holy Spirit works faith in a sinner, by the word, he applies the promises of the Gospel, to raise him up and comfort him. As he makes use of the law to terrify sinners, and to strike them down, so for their revival and comfort, he applies the promises of the Gospel, which blesses them and gives them life. The curses of the law, when they break in upon sinners with force and violence, affect them with their misery, whereas when the promises of the Gospel are applied to wounded sinners, they get a sight of their remedy. The law shews men the matter of their obedience, and denounces the wrath of God against them, if they fail in it; but it gives them no strength to perform their duty, nor does it leave them any hope; whereas when the Spirit applies the promises of the Gospel to us, he begets in us a spiritual life, on which foundation the glorious structure of eternal life is raised.

All sinners, before they are convinced of their sinful insufficiency, are righteous in their own eyes, and are livingⁿ men in their own opinion; but when the law comes, it beats them off from such a false bottom, and leaves them dead to comfort; and then the worm of conscience begins to tear them, and they can never live with pleasure, 'till the Holy

ⁿ Rom. vii. 9.

Spirit breathes life into them, by an evangelical promise of pardon and everlasting life, thro' Jesus Christ. The law shews a burning lake, sending out flames of wrath, to consume transgressors, but the Gospel opens the fountain of Christ's blood, wherein all sin and uncleanness can be washed away: The law displays a black flying roll of curses, to scare evil-doers, but the Gospel produces a free pardon for all sin, sealed and ratified by the blood of Christ: The Spirit in the law applies the threatening to a sinner, and curses him for his transgressions; but in the Gospel he pours oil into the wounds of a contrite sinner, and whispers peace and pardon in his ear: In the law he terrifies and wounds him, makes him sensible of his approaching and deserved destruction; but in the Gospel he speaks comfort to him who is disconsolate, heals his bruises, opens a way for his escape, and sweetly allures and draws him to Christ by faith. When the Spirit applies the promises of the Gospel to sinners, and shews them the gracious and merciful nature of Christ, his love to lost transgressors, and the openness of his arms to receive them, they fall down at the kind Redeemer's foot, and wait 'till he breathes the light of comfort into them.

It was never the design of the Gospel to abolish the law, as it is a rule of life, but rather to establish it. The great apostle ° Paul thrust

° Rom. iii. 31.

from himself all thoughts of weakening the authority of the law, when he said, with a holy warmth, "Do we make void the law thro' faith? God forbid: We rather establish the law." The law, as it is a covenant of works, is indeed abolished by Christ, because it has been completely fulfilled, and all its demands have been fully answered by him, as the surety of his people; therefore all its deathful obligations are cancelled, with respect to those for whom he died; but^p when Christ, as a surety, delivers his people from the law, as a covenant of works, he, as the King of righteousness, brings them under it, as it is a rule of life. When men can entertain mild thoughts of sin, and take up with low thoughts of the law, it is a black mark upon them, that they do not cordially trust in Christ, as a priest, who is able to procure their ransom; for every one who sincerely trusts in the infinite merit of the sacrifice Christ has offered up, as the great high-priest, at the same time bows to the rod of his strength, and submits to the scepter of his righteous government. Every one who relies on Christ for righteousness, to justify him before God, takes him for his Lord, and endeavours, in his strength, to regulate his actions by the holy law of his Maker, remem-

^p See Mr. Richard Taylor's admirable discourse on the establishment of the law by the Gospel, especially p. 11—18, 57—74, 93—107.

bering that he is bought with the price of his Redeemer's blood, that he may no longer be his own, but his who purchased him at so costly a rate, and may not be left to fulfil the will of the flesh, but be made free to conform to the law of him, who calls him to glory and virtue.

The happiness of sinners is inexpressibly great, when the Spirit applies the promises of the Gospel to them; because the Gospel brings the most glad tidings of great joy, that can possibly be sounded in the ears of such as, having destroyed themselves, stand in need of help from God. It makes known a Saviour, who groaned, bled, sighed, and died, as he was man, for the iniquity of his people; and who, as he was God, was able to satisfy for sin, and is fit to manage all the concerns of those who cast their care upon him, and in whom if sinners trust, they shall never be ashamed. The Gospel publishes a free amnesty to transgressors, and a full pardon for all sins; it opens the prison doors, and says to them that are bound, come forth; it shakes off their fetters, and girds them with gladness, and it gives them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness: The Gospel reveals a perfect righteousness to the guilty, the righteousness of Christ, which finishes transgression, makes an end of sin and propitiation for iniquity, and renders all

to whom it is imputed, acceptable to God their judge: The Gospel proclaims peace to such as have engaged in a sinful warfare against the great preserver of men, and invites them to throw down their arms, to be received into favour, and to partake of that peace of reconciliation, which Christ purchased by the death of his cross: The Gospel directs the unclean to go to the Holy Spirit, who can purge away all their blackness, and make them white, by sprinkling the clean water of sanctification upon them: In fine, the Gospel promises perfect happiness to such as are by nature miserable, and it assures such as believe in Christ, that after they have followed him in a course of obedience, they shall stand before him, cloathed with the white attire of glory, innocence, and immortality. All these inestimable benefits are promised freely, and are not made to depend on conditions performed by us; this makes the Gospel in a peculiar manner to be glad tidings of great joy to us. Happy then are our ears, if we hear the joyful sound spread by the Gospel, and happy are we if we receive its message! seeing it declares to us, that to us is sent a Saviour, even Christ the Lord, who tho' he was born a child, and appeared as a miserable man, yet he is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the prince of peace, of the increase of whose government there is no end; who must reign 'till he has perfected

all the designs of his mercy towards his people, and has put all his enemies under his feet; and who after that will reign King for ever and ever.

If the Holy Spirit employs both the law and the Gospel, when he works faith in the hearts of sinners, this may direct such as are entrusted with the preaching of the Gospel, as to their conduct in dispensing the bread of life. They must not separate the law from the Gospel, nor must they lay one or the other aside, but they must tread in the footsteps of the Holy Spirit, who makes use of both. It must be owned, that it is comfortable to sincere Christians, to hear the Gospel; but when nothing but pure Gospel is preached, unmortified sinners, who have never been alarmed by legal terrors, are ready to turn the grace of God into wantonness; and because they hear only of mercy, are in danger to forget their duty. On the other hand, where men preach nothing but the law, and do not lead their hearers to distinct conceptions of the difference between the law and the Gospel, they prove unsuccessful preachers; for they either torment humble sinners, and cast them into despair, or they train persons up in a lifeless Pharisaic formality, and induce them to take up with the form of godliness, without troubling themselves about the power of true religion.

Part II. OF SAVING FAITH. 153

It must be confessed, that the freaks of many who sit under the sound of the word, are so various, that it is not a very easy matter, for such as desire to be found faithful dispensers of the bread of life, to know how to conduct themselves in their ministrations. There is a sett of formal professors, who are so drenched in a legal spirit, that they cannot bear to hear of any thing but the duties of religion, and what they are pleased to call the conditions of salvation; they pretend to hear, with great pleasure, of faith, repentance, contrition, humiliation, self-denial, mortification, and sincere obedience, and such like subjects; tho' it is too often seen, that they take very little care to exceed others in the practice of these duties. If the Gospel doctrines of free election, justification by the righteousness of Christ, the inability of man to turn himself, the necessity of the Spirit's operations, and the insufficiency of works to attain salvation, are unfolded to them, they are presently alarmed with fear, lest a gap is opening to let in antinomian errors: They do not like such sort of preaching, they pretend it is only amusing Christians with what they are under no necessity to know, and puzzling them with knotty, difficult matters, too high for common understandings: These are most senseless and ridiculous pretences; for what signifies it to tell a person of his duty, if he is not told where he must go for strength to perform it? There

There is another sort of hearers, who pretend to be so ravished with the admiration of Gospel grace, that they cannot, without a breach of patience, hear of their duty; the reason of which it is to be feared is, they care not to perform it. If they are told of the evil of sin, and are pressed to confess their sins, to renew their repentance, to abound in good works, to be diligent to bring credit to the grace of God, by walking agreeably to the holiness of the law, they are offended; they brand this with the odious name of legal preaching; all this is, in their reckoning, low stuff, not proper for the entertainment of persons of such high qualifications as they imagine themselves to be: They are most in their element, when they hear of little but eternal election; and, to shew their judgment, are best pleased, when this glorious doctrine is dressed in great swelling words of vanity, which instead of clearing it, obscure its beauty; nay, they can scarce think of union to Christ, and justification by his righteousness, without nonsensically running them up into eternity: But surely, it is a very odd way for persons to express their value for the grace of God, by being uneasy at hearing of those things which are appointed to bring credit and glory to it, and are the only sure evidences of it. The same sort of hearers can scarce keep within the bounds of decency, if sinners are exhorted to come to
Christ,

Christ, to believe in him, or to repent of their sins, under the pretence of these things being above the power of man; as if sinners were to be treated like brutes, and not like rational creatures; and as if conceited shallow-brain'd mortals were able to find better ways of preaching than those used by Christ himself, and the apostles who were inspired by him.

The aforesaid mistakes, which giddy professors fall into, are greatly to be lamented, and the extremes into which they are for running are to be avoided. Therefore a faithful labourer in Christ's vineyard will best satisfy his conscience, if he can, in some measure, say with the apostle^a Paul, "I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God." What the Holy Spirit has joined together, let not vain man pretend to separate: The Spirit makes use of the law and the Gospel, in working faith, and it must be the work of preachers to join the law and the Gospel together; they must awaken and wound by the law, and they must comfort and heal by the Gospel; by the law they must strike with terror such as are insensible, and rouse such as are sleepy; and by the Gospel they must pour the soft healing oil of the covenant into the wounds of such as are broken in spirit, and are sinking under the weight

^a Acts xx. 27.

of their misery: This is rightly to divide the word of truth; which is what the apostle Paul gave in charge to Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved to God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Rightly to divide the word, is to dispense it suitably and agreeably to the temper and frame of hearers: The promises of the Gospel are not to be laid open to sinners, who are snoring on beds of sloth, but they must be awakened by the threatenings of the law: On the other hand, the corroding medicines of the law are not to be applied to such as are ready to be swallowed up with excess of sorrow, but to them must be administer'd the strengthening, reviving cordials of the Gospel. By the law sinners must be led to the brink of Jordan, but by the Gospel they must be carried over Jordan, into the promised land of spiritual rest.

Were only the promises of the Gospel, and the riches of free grace to be spoke of to a stupid and secure sinner, who never felt the burden of indwelling sin, and never was alarmed with fear, on account of his many actual provocations, he would be ready to abuse the grace of God, and to turn it into wantonness. If one who has some speculative knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel, but yet

was never brought to see the odious nature of sin, was not at all to hear of the terrors of the law, but was always to be told of the grace of the Gospel, he would be encourag'd in his lazy indolent course, and would not think of working out his salvation with fear and trembling; he would put a wrong construction on the doctrine of grace; and because eternal life is from the election of God, and the reward of Christ's death, and he can do nothing to purchase life, he would be ready to think, he needs not do any thing, to shew that he has life, and so would be for separating the end from the means: The secret language of such a person's heart must be to this purpose; I acknowledge the law to be holy, and the commandment to be just and good, but the law was made for such as are holy, and can comply with its precepts; it is of no use to me, because Christ has fulfilled it for me, and delivered me from its curse and condemning sentence; I expect salvation from free grace, and from that only; I could be glad, indeed, I could forbear some sins, but they are the sins of my constitution, and I cannot help them; however, if I belong to the election of grace, as I hope I do, they cannot harm me in the event; nay I cannot but think the grace of God is most exalted, when the chiefest sinners are saved: If I belong to God, he will see no sin in me; his purpose according to election must stand,
and

and he will not be frustrated by any thing I can do, which is amiss; tho' I may be overtaken by infirmities, and so may be judged by censorious men to be a reprobate, yet I will not be afraid, for God is infinite in mercy, and he will glorify his free grace in saving me, tho' I cannot be so strict as some may wish: If I am a chosen vessel, my iniquities shall not separate me from God; and it may be, I am suffered to fall in the eye of the world, to let such as are fond of a covenant of works see, that grace will have all the glory of man's salvation. In this profane and silly manner secure sinners are apt to argue, who do not consider, that tho' they are not elected and saved, because they are holy, yet the end of their being chose and redeemed is, that they may be holy. It is difficult to conceive, how they can be taken off from this wild way of talking, if no words of terror must be sounded in their ears.

Were only the terrors of the law to be sounded in the ears of one, who is under a sense of his guilt and misery, he would be driven to despair; for he would be made to know his disease, but would never find out what can cure him. The language of such a person would be this: The law of God is holy, and commands nothing but what it is my interest to comply with, but I have unreasonably broke it, and could I now fullfil it in all things, this would make no atonement
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for my past breaches of it: I have sinned against the great preserver of men, I have cast contempt on his commandments, and spurned at his authority, I have been so foolish as to run against him, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers; I have thoughtlessly been treasuring up wrath to myself, and now to my unspeakable amaze, I see an angry God preparing his instruments of death; he is marching against me, with his sword drawn, and his bow bent: Alas! his thunders scare me, his lightnings daunt me, his arrows stick fast within me, and because of his terrors I am distracted: What shall I do to escape his wrath, and whither shall I fly for help? O that the mountains might fall on me, and hide my guilty head, and that the hills might screen me from the piercing eyes of my offended judge: Can I think ever to be so happy? O no, I can fly no where from his presence, his vengeance will every where follow me, and he will for ever glorify his injured perfections in making me miserable: O eternity, eternity! How shall I endure an eternity of woe? How shall I dwell always in devouring fire? How shall I take up my abode with everlasting burnings? My heart fails within me, my blood runs cold, my spirits sink, and my flesh trembles at the dreadful prospect; and my sorrow is increased from my being forced to own, that this is what I have procured for myself; I justly deserve it,

God

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God is righteous, and I have rebelled against him. To tell convinced sinners of nothing but the law, can only fill them with shuddering horror, and shake them with despairing fears; therefore, tho' the terrors of the Lord ought to be set before careless sinners, to awaken them, yet the promises of the Gospel must be opened to such as are contrite, to yield them comfort.

The law and the Gospel must both be preached, and then when a sinner is made sensible of his guilt, and of his inability to perform the law, and work out his salvation by his own strength, he at the same time is directed whither to fly for help, even to Christ Jesus, who is exalted, as a prince and a Saviour, to grant repentance and the remission of sins. When he has faith wrought in him by the Holy Spirit, this is the language of his heart; I am by nature a child of wrath, and a stranger to all good; I have destroyed myself, by my fall from God, and my help can only be from his free grace; I have brought death on my immortal spirit, and Christ only can give me life; I renounce all confidence in the flesh; my performances shall not save me, neither will I any longer trust in duties, or say to the works of my hands, you are my hope; in the Lord Jehovah only, even in Jesus, my Saviour and my God, will I have righteousness and strength; to him will I look for life, and to him I desire to give up myself,

self, knowing that tho' I can make him no recompence, yet I ought to do much for his glory, to shew my gratitude to him.

It would be irrational to suppose, that all sinners must be treated in the same manner. Secure sinners are to be brought into the wilderness, that they may take a prospect of mount Sinai; that they may hear the thunders rattle, and see the lightnings flash, and that they may view the God of vengeance, like the devouring fire, on its bleak and naked top, proclaiming aloud, that whoever continues in sin, shall certainly die for ever. Disconsolate contrite persons should be conducted into the peaceful shades, and the quiet groves of the hill of God, where the still small voice of the turtle may be heard, to sooth their cares, and allay their sorrows; and they should be invited to the palaces of Sion, where Christ, the King of glory, appears in the galleries of his grace, saying, Come to me all you that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you rest; I will lead you into pastures where salvation will spring up always fresh, and I will cause you to lie down by the quiet streams, that you may be regaled with pleasures grown to full perfection, and revived with joys which will ever last.

The Spirit works faith by the instrumentality of the word; therefore when we wait dependently for the stirrings and breathings of the Spirit, we must likewise make con-

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science

science of hearing the word preached: As that will be of no use to us, except the Spirit renders it efficacious, so we have no reason to expect that he will work faith in us, if we wilfully neglect our duty, and despise the word. It must with sorrow be owned, that the Gospel is hid from a great part, if not the greatest number of such as sit under it, where it is preached pure, and without the adulterating mixtures of mens pretended wisdom. The Gospel in these degenerate ages of the world has lost its general efficacy on the hearers of it; it is hid to them, and the most affecting consideration of all is, that if it is always hid to them, they must perish.

In the primitive times, when the Gospel was first promulgated, it was revealed with great power and energy to the hearts and consciences of sinners that heard it; for they deferred not their repentance one day, on the score of any worldly considerations; they did not stay 'till they had set their houses in order, neither did the fear of losing their lives, estates, pleasures, and all sublunary enjoyments, separate between them and Christ: They cried out, Welcome blessed Saviour, most welcome thou art to us, tho' thou comest with reproach, contempt, and the cross: We know, tho' our following thee may starve our bodies, it will enrich our souls. Crouds of sinners, who heard the apostles preach, turned to God speedily and suddenly. Then there

there might have been seen some coming to a sermon, with a silly grin, and an envious sneer, with an intention to deride and scoff the preachers of Christ, as babblers who had little to say, but going away with tears gushing out of their eyes, and hastening to some retired solitude, where they might, without interruption, bewail their misery, and cry to God for the pardon of their sins: Then there might have been viewed some boldly advancing, with anger reddening in their faces, and fury sparkling in their eyes, fully resolv'd to imprison the preachers, and disturb the hearers, but returning as struck with a clap of thunder, sighing, and hanging down their heads, beating their breasts, and crying out, What shall we do to be saved? What must we do to get an interest in the Mediator, whom we have despised and persecuted? Where may we find him, for without him we must perish? The ministration of the Gospel had a great effect on sinners, when it was preached by the apostles; because when it was revealed by the voice of men exter-

^f Thus when Paul was addressing himself to the Athenians, some of them cried out *Τὶ αὖ θέλει ὁ σπερμολόγος ἔτι λέγειν* Acts xvii. 18. The word *σπερμολόγος* was a word of great contempt among them, and therefore Demosthenes called Aeschines so.

Εἰ Μίνως ἦν ὁ κακουργῶν, ἀλλὰ μὴ σπερμολόγος, περίτριμνα ἀγορᾶς, ὅλεις γραμματεὺς, ἐκ αὐτὸν ὀνειδιζομένους τοιαῦτ' εἰπεῖν. Demost. de corona, cap. 39. p. 79. Ed. Oxon. p. 494. Ed. Francof. vid. Ulpian. in loc. p. 536.

nally to the ear, it was revealed inwardly to the heart and conscience, by the enlightening and softening power of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel has in a great measure lost its force among us; its conquests are few, and the dispensers of it have reason to complain of their labouring in vain, and spending their strength to very little purpose: It is hid from the greatest part of those who hear it, and the reasons may be these; men rebel against the light, and will not let go the lusts which the word condemns, nor perform the duties which it commands; persons do not come to hear the word with sincere hearts and docible spirits, as what is backed by divine authority, and by which they must be judged at the last day; but they come to it either out of curiosity, thinking to hear something new, agreeable to their mean fancies, or moving to their lower passions; or else from a worse motive, atheistically hoping what they hear may be the matter of their laughter, or the subject of their profane censures; hearers are too often so far from depending on the Spirit, to work in and by the word, that they resist him; when he begins to grate upon their conscience, they stifle and damp his motions, and at length move him to resolve to strive no more with them. These are some of the causes why the Gospel is hid from the generality of such as hear it preached, and this is as great a judgment as can befall them. Sinners

ners then, who are under the ministration of the word, should diligently hearken to it, and humbly depend on the operation of the Spirit, that the Gospel may not be hid to them, but that the Comforter may so realize it to them, that they may not judge it to be a romantic fancy, or a delusive story, but a revelation from heaven, necessary to be believed, and worthy to be embraced: They should not content themselves without a knowledge of it, which may warm their hearts, and enflame them with love, as well as inform their understandings, and fill their heads with light: and it ought to be their earnest desire, and fervent prayer, that when they hear the Gospel, they may have the Spirit working the grace of faith in the hearing it.

To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three Persons, but the one King eternal, immortal, invisible, the blessed and only potentate, dwelling in light unapproachable, be glory, honour, and power ascribed, now, henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

PART THE THIRD.

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NATURE

OF

SAVING FAITH.

THE primary object of saving faith is God, reconciling sinners to himself, in and thro' Christ; and faith is built on him, as he is a God of truth; but the immediate object of saving faith is Christ, by whom sinners have access to God; it is safe to trust in him, because he has infinite power to finish the work of redemption, and an all-sufficient fulness to relieve the indigent. Faith, as it justifies, regards Christ only as a priest bearing sin, and making atonement for iniquity; but for direction, comfort, and support, it respects him as a prophet, dealing forth the word of life, and as a king, ruling and governing his people, and subduing all his

his and their enemies. Corrupt nature is an entire stranger to this useful and necessary grace, and it never grows on that barren soil; it is brought about by the almighty power of the divine Spirit, who shews sinners their miserable state, sets before them the danger which attends them, and presents to their view the righteousness of Christ, which is the only covering which can hide their defects from the piercing eyes of God's holiness and jealousy.

There may be in those who are never saved, a great deal of traditional knowledge of what Christ is, and what he has done and suffered; this may be without any cordial reception of him as a Saviour: Where there is no assent to what the Scripture has revealed concerning Christ, there can be no faith in him; this assent of the mind then is a necessary and essential act of faith, but more than this is required to it. When faith is wrought in the heart of a sinner, he is emptied of all conceit of his own worth, righteousness, and fulness, and is laid low in his own eyes; he looks with concern, eagerness, and affection to Christ dying for sin; he flies to him for refuge from the eager pursuit of the avenger of blood, he receives Christ, and rests upon him alone, as one that has merited the free remission of his sins, that can support his soul under the many difficulties which attend him, in the course of his duty, and can deliver from the eternal

evils which are deserved by sin ; and he relies on him for a favourable admission into the presence of God, and for a full and free justification in his right. All these acts are proper and essential to that faith, which is of the operation of the Holy Spirit, and consequently is peculiar to God's elect.

C H A P. I.

Of the assent of Faith to what the Scripture has revealed concerning Christ.

SUCH as never were acquainted with the true nature of faith in Christ, may yield an assent to what the Scripture has declared concerning him, if they have had the advantage of a good education, and have been trained up to read the Scriptures, and to hear the word preached ; and they may for a time appear warm and zealous for those truths, which at another time they, having never had any root in themselves, ridicule and vilify: Tho' this must be owned, yet it cannot be from hence, with the least justice, concluded, that there can be true faith, where the mind with-holds its assent from any thing revealed in Scripture about Christ ; for in genuine faith there must be an assent to every thing

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thing declared in the oracles of truth concerning him, as well as a consent of the will to receive him as a Saviour.

It must be granted, that there may be right conceptions concerning Christ, where there is no trusting in him, from the heart, for righteousness; but there never can be any right trust in him, where all that the Scripture declares concerning him is not fully received, and firmly believed. Faith believes that Christ is truly God, one in nature with the Father, and truly man; that he is God and man in one person, that he is the only prophet of the church, to guide his people in the knowledge of all things necessary to salvation; that he is the great high-priest appointed over the house of God, who having satisfied God's justice, and made an atonement for the sins of his people, lives for ever, at the right-hand of the Father, to interceed for them; and that he is the sole King, and Lord of all things: It believes, that in the fulness of time he, the true Messiah, appeared in the flesh, lived a life of sorrow and ignominy, and died a shameful and an accursed death for sins not his own; that he was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures; that he ascended on high, and led captivity captive; that he has sat down at the Father's right-hand, crowned with honour and dignity; that from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead, and that

that of his kingdom there shall be no end: All this every one believes concerning Christ, who ventures the welfare of his soul in his hands; and thus Christ has been believed on in the world from the beginning. It would be monstrously irrational to suppose, that men should trust their whole affairs in the hands of Christ, without knowing, in some measure, who he is, or what he is. Except we believe that Christ is God, we can never be satisfied that he has power sufficient to complete the work of redemption; unless we know that he is man, we can never be fully convinced that he was in a capacity to suffer, and that he could have been a proper representative and head of the human nature, when he suffer'd; and unless we believe that he has actually suffered for sin, and completely satisfied God's Justice, we can have no good grounds to hope, that we shall be spared from undergoing the punishment we have deserved, and be made partakers of that salvation, which we can never merit for ourselves.

The need there was for the Son of God to assume a human body, to make satisfaction for sin, is set in a very good light by an ancient * defender of our faith. " Christ did not

* Οὐ γὰρ ἀπλῶς ἐδέχθη ἐν σώματι γενέσθαι, ὅθ' ἴδιον ἤθελε φανῆναι· ἠδύνατο γὰρ εἰς μόνον ἤθελε φανῆναι καὶ δι' ἑτέρου κρείττενος τὴν θεοφάνειαν αὐτῷ ποιήσασθαι· ἀλλὰ λαμβάνει τὸ ἡμέτερον, καὶ πέτο' ἐχ' ἀπλῶς, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀχράντου καὶ ἀμοιάντου, ἀνθρώπος ἀπείρου παρθένου, καθαρὸν καὶ οὔτως ἀμύγιστον τὸ ἀνθρώπου συνεισάγει. αὐτὸς δὲ μυστήριον

not design barely to be in the body, nor did he purpose only to make a shew of himself in the flesh; for had this been the utmost of his design, he would have taken to himself a more glorious body than the human, therein to have appeared like a God; but he assumed our flesh, and that not in the ordinary way, but from a pure virgin; he assumed a holy body, without a mixture of that corruption which is common to all other men. He who is Creator of all things, having taken a body like to ours, seeing we were all obnoxious to death, yielded it to the stroke of death, in the place of us all, and offered it up to the Father; in this he manifested the greatest good-will to men, that so we all dying in him, representatively, the law which binds destructi-

μικρὸς τῷ ὅλῳ, — ἀπὸ τῶν ἡμετέρων τὸ ὅμοιον λαβὼν, διὰ τὸ πάντας ὑπευθύνος εἶναι τῇ ᾧ θανάτῳ φθορᾷ, ἀντὶ πάντων αὐτὸ θάνατον παρὰ δόξας, προσῆγε τῷ Πατρὶ, καὶ τὸτο φιλανθρώπως ποιεῖν, ἵνα ὡς μὲν πάντων ἀποθανόντων ἐν αὐτῷ, λυθῇ ὁ κατὰ τὴν φθορᾷ τῶν ἀνθρώπων νόμος, ὅτε ἡ πληρωθείσης τῆ ἐξουσίας ἐν τῷ κυριακῷ σώματι, καὶ μηκέτι χάραν ἔχοντος κατὰ τὸ ὅμοιον ἀνθρώπων ὡς ἡ εἰς φθορὰν ἀναστρέψαντας τὰς ἀνθρώπους πάλιν εἰς τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν ἐπιστρέψῃ, καὶ ζωοποίησιν τὰς ἀπὸ τῆ θανάτου, τῇ τῷ σώματι ἰδιοποίησιν, καὶ τῇ τῇ ἀναστάσεως χάριτι, τὸ θάνατον ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὡς καλὰ μὲν ἀπὸ πυρὸς ἐξαφανίζον. Συνοδὸν γὰρ ὁ Λόγος, ὅτι ἄλλως ἐκ αὐτοῦ λυθείη τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἡ φθορὰ, εἰ μὴ διὰ τὴν πάντως ἀποθανεῖν ἐκ ὧν τε ἡ ἡ τὸ Λόγον ἀποθανεῖν ἀθάνατον ὄντα καὶ τὸν Πατέρα υἱόν· τὸτε ἐνεκεν τὸ διανάμεινον ἀποθανεῖν αὐτῷ λαμβάνειν σῶμα, ἵνα τὰς τὰς ἐπὶ πάντων λόγῳ μετὰ λαβὼν, ἀντὶ πάντων ἵκανον γένηται τῷ θανάτῳ, καὶ διὰ τὸ ἐνοικήσαντα Λόγον, ἀφθαρτον ἀβυσμίνῃ, καὶ λατὸν ἀπὸ πάντων ἡ φθορὰ παύσεται τῇ τῇ ἀναστάσεως χάριτι. ὅθεν ὡς ἱερεῖον καὶ θύμῃ παντὸς ἐλευθέρου σπύλῃ, ὁ αὐτὸς αὐτῷ ἔλαβεν σῶμα προσάγων εἰς θάνατον, ἀπὸ πάντων ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων ἡφάνισε τὸ θάνατον τῇ προσφορᾷ τῇ καταλλήλῃ. Athanasius de incarnatione Verbi. Vol. I. 54. Ed. Monfaucon.

on on man, might be abolished, in that it was fulfilled, by its force being spent on the body of our Lord, and so might have no power over us. His design also was, to cause men who had fallen into corruption, to return to incorruption, and to quicken them, and raise them from death to life, by his death and resurrection. The eternal Word, knowing that the destruction of man could not be removed, but that he must completely suffer death for him; and it being impossible for the Word to die, who is immortal, and the Son of the Father, he therefore took to himself a body liable to death, that the body being taken into union with the Word, who is over all, might be fit to die for all, and by vertue of the indwelling Word might remain incorruptible, and all men by the resurrection of this body might be freed from corruption. He having taken to himself a body, gave it up to death, and offered it a holy sacrifice, without spot and blemish, that he might avert death from all who deserved it, by putting himself in their place and stead."

There was a necessity, if not in the nature of things, yet by the appointment of God, after Christ had undertaken to be the surety of sinners, for him to suffer, in order to his being glorified, and their being saved; this he himself expressly insinuated to the two disciples, with whom unknown he entered into conversation, as they walked from Jerusalem

to Emmaus, when among other discourse he put this ^b question to them, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to have enter'd into his glory?" In order to our Redeemer's suffering for us, it was needful that he should take the human nature; and that he might support his human nature under his sufferings, and make them infinitely meritorious, and so might be crowned with glory and honour, it was necessary he should have infinite power, or be God. If all this is true, as it really is, there can be no faith in Christ, except we receive the Scripture account concerning him, or believe that he is God as well as man; that as our prophet he taught us the way of life, and confirmed his doctrine by miracles and mighty works; that as our high-priest he suffered and died, according to the Scriptures, and that he rose from the dead, and is exalted at the right-hand of power, where as a king he will reign for ever, and will in his own time complete all his designs of mercy on his people, and will subdue all his enemies under his feet.

It is necessary that every one who believes in Christ should, in some measure, know who he is, and what he is; yet it does not from hence follow, that we must seek after adequate ideas of those things relating to him, about which the Scripture is silent. We can-

^b Luke xxiv. 16.

not believe in him, without knowing that he is truly God, and truly man in one person; but we are not called to enquire how he is one with the Father, what is the mode of his eternal Sonship, and after what manner he took the human nature into union with his divine person: These are unprofitable questions, because they are about matters too high for our narrow conceptions, and had they been proper for us to have known, we may be assured they would have been revealed to us in the Scriptures; as they are not, men only shew their vanity and insolence, in meddling with them, and give proof how easy it is for persons, who have a high conceit of their own parts and penetration, to manifest their great ignorance, and their being able to heap a multitude of hard words, to express they know not what.

Every true Christian receives the Scripture accounts of the person, sufferings, and offices of Christ, on the authority of that God of truth who has revealed them, and does not pretend to dispute the reality of the doctrines, which he finds are plainly revealed in the oracles of truth, because he cannot fully understand, and adequately conceive the manner of them. We are to use our reason in enquiring after supernatural truths, and we ought not to receive any thing as truth, which is directly shocking to right reason; for it is impossible that a God of infinite wisdom

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dom should reveal a thing which is inconsistent with the highest reason; but we have very little acquaintance with ourselves, and know scarce any thing concerning the weakness of our understandings, if we take upon us the freedom to arraign a thing revealed, as contrary to reason, because the manner of it may perhaps transcend our low capacities. There would have been no need of a revelation, had we known all things necessary for us to know; and it would scarce have been worthy of God, had it contained nothing but what our poor heads can fully comprehend. Such as reject every thing as contrary to reason, which they cannot fully comprehend, would do well to consider the judicious direction of a learned Jew, the sense of which is as follows, "In every enquiry, which is resolved by reasoning, inferring one thing from another, if it agrees with the dictates of Revelation, we say of it, it is a rightly regulated search, because what we conclude from it agrees with revealed truth. And here we have in our hands two lights, the light of Scripture, and the light of our own understanding; but if what we gather by reasoning is not agreeable to the dictates of Revelation,

* Rabbi Elias ben Moses, a Karaite of Constantinople, in a manuscript treatise entitled *אדרת אליהו* cited by the late exquisitely learned and polite divine, M. Triglandt. *Diss. de Karaeis*, p. 153, 154. This author lived toward the end of the fifteenth century, vide *Wolfii Bibliothec. Heb.* Vol. I. p. 148, 149. Vol. III. p. 94.

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then we must own, that we cannot get to the bottom of the matter by mere human sagacity, and we must by faith receive what revelation declares: Had it been possible for human understanding to have taken in every thing fully and completely, there had been no need of a revelation; but for this end was a divinely inspired revelation afforded us, that we may gain some knowledge of those things, which we cannot attain by the light of our own understanding: Besides this, revelation is back'd with signs and wonders, which sometimes altered the very course of nature, that men may know, that deep secrets are revealed, and may be brought to submit to what is revealed, tho' it may surpass the comprehension of human understanding." This solid reasoning of one, who had only a regard to the Old Testament, may put all to the blush, who will set their understanding on a level with God's infinite wisdom.

The design of revelation was not to destroy our reason, but to improve it; and tho' it makes known to us things which we never could have found out, and which after they are revealed, we cannot fully comprehend, yet it never contradicts right reason, in all the things which it declares to us concerning Christ's person, and his transactions for us: So that it is a great weakness in any to insinuate, that we are not to use our reason in searching into divine things; it is also a most
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intolerable piece of arrogance, for us to make our shallow understanding the sole judge, about things which are the proper province of faith. I cannot here refrain from producing the words of a rational and elegant^d divine of the ancient church, "An adversary of the truth may say, Has God given us reason for nothing? Are we not endowed with a faculty of judging concerning things? We ought by reasonings to enquire into what is proposed to us to be believed, and not to take our religion upon trust, and without examination. All this is, in some sense, right; but the bounds of our enquiry ought to be confined within the compass of the divine oracles, and the rules of religion given us by God; but he who makes such an objection, transgresses the rules, and does not stick close to the divinely inspired writings, but curiously and rashly enquires into divine things, offers violence to the truth, and chooses rather to be led by his own weak reasonings, than to submit to faith; just as if the same person could give

^d Αλλ' ὅρα τί φησιν ὁ ἐχθρὸς τῆς ἀληθείας· μὴ γὰρ ἀργῶς ἡμεῖς ὁ Θεὸς δίδωκεν λογισμῶς, μὴ γὰρ ἀπλῶς ἐλήφαμεν τὸ εὖ τὸ κατ' ἄρθρον; διὸ γὰρ λογισμοῖς ἐρευνᾶν τὴν πίσιν, καὶ μὴ ἀνεξετάστον εἶναι τὴν ἐπιστάμεν. καλῶς, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐξετάσεως ὅρον εἶναι διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος λόγου, καὶ τὴν παρ' αὐτοῦ ἡμῶν δοξαίαν τῆς εὐσεβείας κανόνας· σὺ δὲ τῆς κανόνας ὑπερβαίνειν, καὶ σοιχαῖς ταῖς δοκτυσίαις, γραφαῖς, ἀλλὰ ποικιλοτροπικαῖς τοῖς λόγοις, καὶ βιάζεις τὴν ἀλήθειαν, καὶ πανταχῶς σπαιδίζεις καὶ λογισμῶν ἀνομαλίᾳ μάλλον ἀπολεθῆσαι, ἢ πίσιν ἀσπασθῆναι ὡς περ τῶν ἄλλων κατεληφῶς τὴν πύρην, ἢ τῶν ἄλλων ἐκ παρὰ γνώμονος τῶν ὁρωμένων. Chrysost. Hom. in Matth. xxi. 23. in Cotelier. Eccles. Graec. Monum. Vol. III. p. 130.

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us a complete account of the things, which are subject to the view of our senses." It would be very strange if creatures who are of yesterday, and in comparison know nothing, should have a liberty to arraign as folly, what the Ancient of Days, a God of wisdom and truth, has revealed, when there is that in the most inconsiderable of the works of nature, which never has been accounted for by all the searchers into natural secrets from the beginning, and we may venture to say never will be, by all who come after them.

Faith with a devout silence, and a religious wonder, receives and assents to all that the Scripture declares concerning Christ, and what he has done in our nature for us, and so does not proudly and disobediently reject with scorn his testimony. Now the testimony which Christ has given of himself, in the Gospel of reconciliation, is, that he is the Son of God, his Father's equal and fellow, the true Messiah, who was the person promised by God of old to be the Redeemer of sinners; and that being come, according to the promise of God, he is able and willing to save them, and consequently, that they ought to believe in him. This testimony faith receives as true and certain, and in its utmost extent, and so it looks to Christ as able and willing to save. When a sinner questions the power and willingness of Christ to save, he does not receive his testimony, and in re-
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jecting this, he defames and reproaches God; for as he does what he can to invalidate Christ's testimony, so he, by consequence, says God is a liar. The apostle John ^e has assured us, that, "He who believes not God, has made him a liar, because he believes not the testimony which God has given of his Son." The testimony which God has given of his Son is, that he is the Saviour of sinners; he then, who either opinionatively, or practically, denies the revelation of God concerning Christ, gives him the lye, and represents him as false and unfaithful.

As unbelief rejects the testimony of Christ, so an evangelical saving faith receives it, and acknowledges that God who reveals it is true. Hence John, the greatest of prophets, who was harbinger to our Lord, said ^f concerning faith in him, "He who receives his testimony, has set to his seal that God is true." He who believes in Christ, as able and willing to save sinners, and receives his doctrine, has added his attestation to the truth of God, and declared that God has fulfilled the promises which he made, to send a Saviour into

^e 1 John v. 10.

^f Ο λαβών τὴν μαρτυρίαν αὐτοῦ ἐσφράγισεν ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς ἀληθὴς ἐστίν.
John iii. 33.

The word ἐπισφραγίσασθαι is used in the same sense by Polybius, in the following passage:

Χαίρων ὁ ἄρμυσεν εἰς τὴν Ρώμην — βεβλόμενος ἐπισφραγίσασθαι διὰ τῆς συγκλήτης τὴν αὐτοῦ παρανομίαν. Polyb. in excerpt. de Virt. & Vit. p. 166. Ed. Vales. p. 1466. Ed. Gronov.

the world. As men affix their seals to contracts, to make them authentic, so the soul, by faith, seals to the truth of God's word, and solemnly protests, that whatever the Gospel says of Christ is true: By this great work, faith answers the design of the Scriptures, and gives the highest glory to God, seeing it acknowledges him to be a God of eternal and unchangeable truth. We creatures cannot honour God more, than by setting the seal of our faith, to justify the truth of the Gospel. No convinced sinner absolutely, and in the general, doubts of the truth of God, but desponding souls unwarily strike at the fidelity of God, in performing the promises of life and salvation, made to sinners in Christ. When we acknowledge God to be as good as his word, when we own his truth in what he has already done, in sending a person every way fit for the work of a Redeemer, and when we rely on his faithfulness, for the accomplishment of all that he has promised yet to do, we set to our seal that God is true; or we believe and receive the testimony which God has given concerning Christ, and Christ has given concerning himself, that he is the only person sent of God, to relieve and help sinners, and that he is able and willing to save them.

When we are brought, by the help of the Spirit, to know and assent to what is declar'd in Scripture concerning Christ, it should always be

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be held fast by us, and kept untouched, as an inestimable treasure. Stedfastness in the faith is pressed upon us, in Scripture, in the warmest manner. The apostle Paul charged Timothy,

Ἐποτύπῃσιν ἔχει ὑγιαίνοντων λόγων, ὡς παρ' ἡμῶν ἤκουσας, ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγαπῇ, 2 Tim. i. 13.

ὑγιαίνοντες λόγοι, or ὑγιεῖς λόγοι, are true and sound words, opinions, or advices, which have no mixture of falshood blended with them; in this sense these adjectives are taken by the Classic writers, when join'd with Λόγος, and likewise when join'd with other substantives, as may appear from a few instances.

Μῦθος δ' ὅς μιν ἦν ὑγιὲς ἐρημύνει. Ἰσai.

Homer. Iliad. IX. v. 524.

This the Scholiast thus explains,

Μῦθος ὑγιὲς] ἔστος μὲν ὁ λόγος ἀπαρέεστος.

Pindar has used the adjective ὑγιὲς in the same sense, when he expresses by it a competent estate, which is what is most to be desired; tho' his old commentators have, I think, mistakenly interpreted the passage of health.

— Ὑγι-

ἔντα δ' εἰ τις ὀλβον

Ἄρθ', ἐχαρκίῳ κλεινέσσι, καὶ

Εὐλογίᾳ προσίδεις· μὴ ματώσῃ

Θεὸς χρίεσθαι.

Ol. V. 53. p. 55. Ed. Ox. p. 145. Ed. Schmid.

Schmidius has in his commentary given a judicious exposition of this passage, p. 149. Sanas divitias, id est, sano animo partas, & usurpatas.

Δίσποτα πᾶσι λόγοις λόγον ἔκ ὑγίαι. Herodot. lib. I. c. 8. p. 4. Ed. Gron.

Gyges is here speaking to his prince Candaules, who was persuading him to an indecent thing.

Ὁ δῆμος ὀπλισθεὶς — ὡς ἔδεν αὐτοὺς ὑγιὲς ὀπλισμένῳ — τὰ ὅπλα αὐτῶν ἐκ τῶν οἰκίῳν ἔλαβε. Thucyd. lib. III. c. 75. p. 191. Ed. Oxon. Where the Scholiast explains ὑγιὲς thus; ὁρῶν ἀληθές.

— κούδεν αἰ νομίζεσθ' ὑγιὲς εἶπεν.

Aristoph. Plut. 274. p. 17. Ed. Amst.

Ἀπόδυσεν αὐτὸν ἔδεν ὑγιὲς ὅς λέγει.

Idem. Thermophor. 643. p. 501.

Τότε διαβαλίτω ταύτῃ τὴν ἀπόδυσιν ὡς ἔχ' ὑγιῆ. Dion. Halic. Antiq. lib. VII. c. 72. p. 478. Ed. Francof. p. 460. Ed. Ox.

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mothy, to keep entire the summary of those sound words, which he had received from him, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love." If other truths are to be held, and never let go, surely the personality, Deity, satisfaction, and righteousness of Christ our Redeemer, must be retained by us; since no other truths can be of half the concern to us; and to be unsettled in articles so important, is a dishonour to rational nature. Steadfastness in the faith has been of late indeed ridiculed, as enthusiasm, by some ignorant incendiaries, who, like wild asses, bray against all inclosures, and endeavour to kick down all fences, that they may wander in the wilderness, where they can find no spiritual pasture: Therefore what shall farther be added upon this head, shall be in the words of the politest ^h writer of our age and nation, whom no one will have the confidence to brand as an Enthusiast, "As nothing is more laudable

^hΕρμης μ' οὖν ποιῇ συνελθόντες ὑποπτα καὶ εἶδεν ὑγιὲς ἀμφοτέραις ταῖς πρεσβύταις ἀπεκρίναντο. Idem. ibid. lib. V. c. 62. p. 327. al. 313.

Αὐταὶ γὰρ ἴσιν ὑγιαίνουσαι περὶ θεῶν δοῦναι καὶ ἀληθείας. Plutarch. de audiend. Poet. Vol. II. p. 20. Ed. Francf. cap. 20. p. 23. Ed. Oxon.

Οὐδὲ μ' ἔτι ὑγίεια ἔτι ἀληθεία νομίζουσιν, ἀλλὰ λόγον ψευδὲς ἐν ἡμῶν. Lucian. de Astrologia, p. 848.

Τί δ' αὖν, ἴφθι οὕτως ὑγιὲς ἡτοι, ὅς ἐπὶ τῇ ψυχῇ τὸ ψεῦδος περιφέρει. Aelian. Var. Hist. lib. VII. c. 20. p. 465. Edit. Perizon.

^h The late Mr. Secretary Addison, in the Spectator, N. 465. in his Works, Vol. III. p. 572, 573.

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(says he) than a search after truth, so nothing is more irrational than to pass away our whole lives, without determining ourselves one way or other, in points which are of the last importance to us. There are indeed many things from which we may with-hold our assent; but in cases by which we are to regulate our lives, it is the greatest absurdity to be wavering and unsettled, without closing with that side which appears the most safe, and most probable. When therefore, by reading or discourse, we find ourselves thoroughly convinced of the truth of any article [of faith] and of the reasonableness of our belief of it, we should never after suffer ourselves to call it in question. We may, perhaps, forget the arguments which occasioned our conviction, but we ought to remember the strength they had with us, and therefore still to retain the conviction they once produced. This is no more than what we do in every common art or science, nor is it possible to act otherwise, considering the weakness and limitation of our intellectual faculties. It was thus that Latimer, one of the glorious army of martyrs, that introduced the Reformation in England, behaved himself, in that great conference which was managed between the most learned among the Papists and Protestants, in the reign of Queen Mary. This venerable old man, knowing how his abilities were impair'd by age, and that it was impossible for

him to recollect all those arguments that directed him in the choice of his religion, lest his companions, who were in the full possession of parts and learning, to baffle and confound their antagonists, by the force of reason. As to himself, he only repeated to his adversaries the articles in which he firmly believed, and in the profession of which he was resolved to die. It is in this manner that the Mathematician proceeds, upon propositions which he has once demonstrated; and tho' the demonstration may have slipped his memory, he builds upon the truth, because he knows it was demonstrated. This method is absolutely necessary for weaker minds, and, in some measure, for men of the greatest abilities, who should farther lay up in their memories, and always keep by them in readiness those arguments, which appear to them of the greatest strength, and which cannot be got over by all the doubts and cavils of infidelity."

As we ought to hold fast the Evangelical doctrines relating to Christ's person and performances, when once we have learned them from Scripture, so we ought to confess him, when others deny him, and should stand up in the defence of his honour, when it is opposed by such as are strangers to the wisdom which is from above. The apostle Jude has expressed, in very strong terms, the duty which is incumbent on Christians, to stand up in defence

fence of the truths of the Gospel, in these words,ⁱ "It was needful for me to write to you, and exhort you, that you should earnestly contend for the faith, once delivered to the saints." The personality, deity, satisfaction, and merit of Christ, are matters of such importance, that we cannot contend for them too earnestly, or with too warm a zeal. Indeed our zeal ought to be of the genuine sort; we should take care, that it does not derive its heat from the wild-fire of passion and prejudice; but we should fetch all our fire from God's altar, and we should imitate the fervent, earnest, open, and undisguised Spirit, which animated the holy Apostles, those truly faithful servants of our Lord, who never could give quarter to errors, on any account at all. As we ought to contend earnestly for the glory and honour of the Lord that bought us, so we should do it constantly; for this is not a matter of more importance at one time than another, but is of the same moment at all times, and equally concerns every man that hopes for salvation.

The Christian hero indeed will take care, that his weapons of warfare are not carnal, but spiritual; but when he has girded himself with the armour of light, and has lifted himself under the banner of the great Captain of his salvation, he will not be deterr'd

† Jude 3.

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from fighting in his cause, by all the persecution of cruel mockings, which may be thrown out against him by proud and haughty scorers; neither will he be cajoled out of his duty by the smooth words, which a generation of neuters and ambodexters use, to persuade Christians to the hateful sin of lukewarmness.

If we engage in the defence of the honour of that Saviour, by whom we are redeemed from hell and death, we must not think it strange, if we are traduced by such as grieve at seeing his glory advanced, as having no due regard to charity. It has been the constant practice of the opposers of the truths of Christ, with an affected gravity to make high pretences to an unmeaning thing, they call charity, which to serve a turn is represented to be the whole of religion, and is dressed up in Scripture words most vilely abused: The love, or charity, which the Scripture so often takes notice of, and so warmly recommends, is love to God the Father who chose us, to Christ who redeemed us, and to our brethren and companions in the faith of the Gospel; but it can hardly be proved that it is, in any one place, taken for the pity we ought as men to shew to those seducers who endeavour to rob us of our faith. Christ indeed has commanded us to love our enemies; and the common laws of humanity ought to keep us from injuring the persons of such as oppose

pose the honour of our Lord; nay we cannot shew too much pity to them, or use too earnest endeavours to bring them to repentance, and the acknowledgment of the truth; but we should with retorted scorn turn our backs upon them, for the contempt they cast on the worthy name by which we are called, and should give no quarter to errors which are calculated to lessen the glory of that mighty Redeemer, in whom we trust for everlasting happiness. We shall act most foolishly if, in order to gain the reputation of persons of temper and universal charity, with such as with a demure look, but with rancorous hearts, oppose the foundations of our hope, we should run the hazard of offending God, shewing ingratitude to Christ, and grieving our brethren. That charity which can only manifest itself in leaving the great articles of our common faith exposed to the scorn of infidels, is no better than a confederacy with death, and an agreement with hell, which neither the whining cant of such as set up for men of moderation, nor the policy of corrupt men, or of the princes of darkness, will be able to make to stand. If we believe in Christ, honour calls us to fight his battles; therefore in his strength, who is sovereign Lord of all, we should lift up a standard against every error, which tends to lessen him; and should never, under pretence of promoting a spurious charity, be diverted
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from striving earnestly for the glory of the captain of our salvation, or from using our endeavours, that the true faith of the Gospel which was once delivered to the saints, and has been handed down to us by our Fathers, may be transmitted pure and entire to the latest posterity.

There can be no saving faith, without assenting to, or believing the doctrine of Christ, continuing steadfast in the belief of it, and contending for his honour; but this is far from being all that is essential to faith, for there must not only be an assent of the understanding to the truth of Christ's mission, sufferings, resurrection, and exaltation, but there must be the consent of the will, to receive him as the only Saviour, and to fall in with the way of salvation by him, which God has appointed.

It has been debated among divines, whether faith is the act of the understanding only, or of the will only; or whether it is a joint act of the understanding and the will: The Papists pretend, that it is only the act of the understanding; and some others, out of an eager desire to contradict them, have seemed to make it to be only an act of the will. Not to enter into the thorny disputes which have been raised on this head, and serve to puzzle rather than clear the matter, the only safe and true determination is, that faith is a joint act of the understanding and the will. It must

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must certainly be the act of the understanding; for as we cannot regard any object, of which we are utterly ignorant, so we cannot believe in Christ, whilst we know him not; and it is by the clearness of light wrought by the Spirit, in the understanding, by which the glories and excellencies of the Redeemer are seen, that the will is persuaded and drawn to receive and embrace Christ. It is ridiculous to deny, that Faith is the act of the understanding; but it is likewise the act of the will, and without an act of the will, it can be no more than that historical faith, which is in many who are never saved. Unbelief is principally seated in the will, and receives from it its greatest strength and malignity: On this account the condemnation of sinners is chiefly charged upon their carnal will; for tho' unbelief is radically in the understanding, and springs originally from the darkness of the mind, or the ignorance that prevails in sinners concerning God, Christ, and themselves, yet it is the inflexible enmity of the will, which gives a regent power to unbelief. As unbelief has its seat radically in the understanding, and principally in the will, so faith is radically in the understanding enlighten'd by the Spirit of God, and in the will renew'd by his divine power: The understanding alone is not the sole seat of this grace, because it takes into the notion of it trust, which is an act of the will: Therefore saving faith is a
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spiritual representation of Christ in the understanding, and a fiducial trust in him with the will; and the dividing the one from the other destroys faith.

It would be very irrational for any thinking man to affirm, that faith is not the act of the understanding; for to press a person to believe in Christ, without knowing him, is to press upon him an implicit, ignorant assent, which is unworthy of a rational creature. Can it be thought that one convinced of the danger he is in, because of his apostacy from God, and afraid of that punishment which awaits him in the other world, can find satisfaction or relief, in relying on an unknown Saviour; or that he will be induced to trust his soul in the hands of a Redeemer, of whom he has no notion? Every Christian ought to be able, in some measure, to say, with the great apostle of the Gentiles, "I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep what I have committed to him, till that day." When a man knows that Christ is able to save him, and that he has power to finish his own work in him, and will certainly do it if he has once begun it, he can quietly and without regret commit his soul to his custody; and firmly persuaded that he will keep his pledge, he can, with patience and serenity of spirit, look

^h 2 Tim. i. 12.

and

and wait for the happy day when he shall be stript of all imperfection, and divested of all weakness. Our blessed Lord has expressly assured us, that it is eternal life to know him, in the following ¹ passage of that solemn prayer, which he put up on earth, as a sample of the method in which he intercedes for his people in heaven. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God; and Jesus Christ." It is said to be life eternal to know God, and Christ whom he has sent; because when we know, so as rightly to believe, eternal life is begun in our souls; and that almighty agent, who has begun the good work of faith in us, will carry it on to perfection; and then faith will be turned into sight, and expectation will be lost in enjoyment. This knowledge of Christ, which is the beginning of life eternal, is not to be restrained to the bare speculations of the mind, but it is a knowledge which powerfully sways, and works upon the whole soul. Bare knowledge often does no service, whence the apostle ^m said, "Knowledge puffs up." Therefore the knowledge of faith is not resident only in the understanding, but it has a suitable influence on the other faculties; it works upon the heart, and produces ardent desires after Christ. Tho' saving faith cannot be without a spiritual knowledge of Christ in the under-

¹ John xvii. 3.

^m 1 Cor. viii. 1.

standing, yet its principal part lies in the will; for as we are to know Christ, so when we have known him, we ^a must receive him, and rely upon him. By faith the soul goes off from itself, and all other things to Christ, this can never be without a spiritual knowledge of him in the understanding, which views him in his perfections and divine excellencies; and this is always followed by the operation of the will, for when the understanding is as the eye to behold Christ, and to receive into itself a glorious representation of him; at the same time the will is, as it were, the hand of the soul to take fast hold and rely on him, and it is by this act of the will that a sinner adheres to him.

We do not believe to the saving of our souls, when we have only a notion in our heads, that Christ is a Saviour; but we believe to eternal life, when with our wills we receive Christ. It may be worth observing, what the Evangelist Philip urged upon the Ethiopian nobleman, when he desired the privilege of baptism. This honourable person was a worshipper of the true God, and was not without the knowledge of the Scriptures, for as he rode in his chariot, he was reading the fifty third chapter of Isaiah, at the time when the Evangelist was commanded, by the Spirit, to address himself to him; but he had not

^a Of these acts of faith I shall speak hereafter, Chap. v, vi.

a discerning of the prophet's spiritual meaning, for he asked Philip whether the inspir'd writer spoke of himself, or some other man; hence Philip took occasion, from that portion of Scripture, to preach to him Jesus, and the Spirit setting home his teaching, he desired to be baptized; on this Philip answered, ° "If thou believest with thy whole heart, thou mayst be baptized;" and accordingly, on his answering, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," he baptized him. It is plain he laid the stress not barely upon believing, but on believing with the whole heart. There may be much of a notional belief, where there is no believing with the whole heart; without this there can be no saving faith; this is not barely to know that Christ can save us, but it is to choose him for our Saviour, exclusive of all others, and to cleave to him with our whole hearts.

As faith is the joint act of the understanding and the will, they who have unwarily made it to lie only in the will are greatly mistaken; and on the other hand the learned among the Papists are highly to be condemned, who affirm that it is only the act of the will: These erroneous hypotheses, were they pursued to the utmost length, would destroy the nature of faith. In saving faith there is

° Acts viii. 27—38.

the assent of the mind to the declaration of the Gospel, that Christ is a Saviour; but this always is accompanied with the consent of the will, or a making choice of Christ for a Redeemer. As a man who uses his reason, cannot trust in him whom he has never known, so it does not appear that it can be of any use to him, to know that Christ is appointed to redeem sinners, unless he chooses him for a Saviour. When a man believes there is light in his mind, to view the beauties and excellencies of Christ, who is the chiefest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely; and there is a rational heavenly appetite in his will, to receive Christ, and to feed on him who is the bread of life, that came down from heaven. In believing the mind is enlightened, to know a Saviour, and to believe what the Gospel reveals, which is Christ as a justifier; and the will as united to Christ, trusts in him for righteousness; and concurring with the understanding, it casts the soul upon him for justification.

C H A P.

C H A P. II.

Of Faith, as it empties a Sinner of all
Conceit of his own Worth.

IT is one act of saving faith to empty a sinner of all opinionated thoughts of his own worth; every sinner is righteous in his own eyes, he is whole and full in his own esteem, and like the members of the church of Laodicea, he thinks he needs nothing. We have in that lukewarm, conceited company, a lively picture of every confident sinner; their condition is thus described by the searcher of hearts, in the ^a letter he directed his beloved disciple to write to them, "Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." A natural man knows not his sad condition, but he is righteous and full in his own esteem, because he has no true discerning of his state, which is a state of guilt, of alienation from God, of death and eternal condemnation; nor of his frame which is defiled, because he apprehends nothing of the spirituality of the law,

^a Rev. iii. 17.

and knows not the infinite holiness of God; he does not measure himself by it, and therefore he is lifted up with the thoughts of his own righteousness, strength, and fulness; had he but a sight of the infinite purity and holiness of God, and did he know how he falls short of it, and how contrary he is to it, he would cry out of his uncleanness, he would shrink into nothing in his own esteem, and all the vain opinions of his righteousness would vanish, as the shadows of the morning before the rising sun.

The pride of the mind is what stands most directly in the way of the Spirit's entrance into the soul of a sinner; therefore the first thing done where he has wrought faith, is emptying a sinner of all opinionated thoughts of his own righteousness, strength, and fulness, and bringing him to a sense of his own unrighteous, weakness, and emptiness. This self-emptying act of faith makes a sinner poor in spirit, and strips off all the rags of a fantastick righteousness; it strikes him with a sense of his weakness, casts him down under the burden of his guilt, and makes him utterly despair of his own strength. When sinners know that the law curses them, and they cannot answer, and that Satan frames accusations against them, to which they cannot reply; when they consider, that the justice of God is offended, and they can give no satisfaction to it, and that the vengeance
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of God with winged speed pursues them, and they cannot keep it off; when they are sensible, that they are naked, and without cloathing, and that they are naturally foolish, and want true wisdom; when they are convinced, that they are impotent and without strength, and that they are guilty, and have no righteousness; when they are satisfied that they are bankrupts, and have nothing to pay their debts, and that if God should exact from them what is justly his due, they must be everlasting sufferers; when they have an experimental knowledge of all this, they grow poor in spirit, and distrusting themselves, trust only in the power, righteousness, mercy, and faithfulness of Christ.

When faith makes a sinner poor in spirit, it strikes him off from himself, and drives him to God alone in Jesus Christ: he renounces confidence in all other things, and looks for mercy from God, as he is gracious to sinners in Christ, in whom he trusts, for a title to the favour of his offended Judge; he resolves either to be saved in God's way, or to perish at his foot. The frame of all sinners who have faith wrought in their hearts, and renounce all sinful dependences, is very graphically described, in the following exhortation, delivered from God by the ^b prophet Hosea, to which a very gracious promise is

Hof. xiv. 1—7.

annexed; " O Israel, return to the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thy iniquity; take to you words and return to the Lord, say to him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the fruit of our lips; Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, you are our gods, for in thee the fatherless finds mercy. I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely, for my anger is turned away from him, I will be as the dew to Israel, he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon; his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon: They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn, and bloom as the vine; their scent shall be as the vine of Lebanon."

It must be owned, that the confession of sin, and the renouncing all sinful dependencies, refer primarily to the church of Israel: The Israelites had offended God, in making a league with the king of Assyria, who was then growing into great power, in the Eastern part of the world; they trusted to his arm of flesh, when they ought to have been looking for relief from God; therefore when they recovered themselves by repentance, they renounced all reliance on the Assyrian, and resolved no more to lean on the foreign aid of an idolatrous prince, but to stay themselves

selves on God alone: They were^e forbid by God to multiply horses, yet this thing they were fond of; but when they were sensible of their sin, they resolved to be found no more in it; looking for more safety and success in going to battle on foot, with God marching before them, than in riding on horseback without his presence with them: They were strongly addicted to idolatry, but when they were taught by smarting judgments, that their idols could not save them in the day of distress, they were weaned from their stocks and stones; and being firmly settled in this belief, that the fatherless could only find mercy with God, they resolved against all idolatrous practices for the future, and purposed never to depart from the true God, to worship idols, nor to say to the works of their hands, you are our Gods, any more.

The words of Hosea, besides their literal respect to the ancient Israelitish church, have a spiritual reference to backsliding believers, when they return to God, and to sinners, when they first come to God by believing. When backsliding believers return to God, they must do as they did when they first came to him by Christ; they must plead that they are guilty, and cannot stand before him, and are fatherless, and have none to help them; and they must cast themselves upon his free

^e Deut. xvii. 16.

and rich grace. When sinners come first to God by believing, they must cast off all dependence on any creature without them, or on any good disposition within them, and they must seek sanctuary in the mercy of God only thro' Christ; they must renounce all confidence in what they have done, or can do; they must not say to a good conscience, to a sincere heart, to their inherent holiness, to their honest intentions, to their good meaning, to their humiliations, to their fervent prayers, or in short to any of their works and duties, you are our saviours: They must not only throw away, with disdain and detestation, all the glittering idols of the world, but must take off their confidence from the best things, which are in themselves, such as their towardly dispositions, their pious inclinations and the most religious services that ever they performed: They must disrobe themselves of all their supposed personal excellencies, and as persons involved in difficulties, out of which they cannot rid themselves, destitute of all strength, and without a helper, fatherless, forlorn, miserable, and ready to perish, they must come to God in Christ; because with him, and with no other, it is that the fatherless find mercy.

When either backsliding believers, on their return to God, or sinners, in their first approach to God, are found in the self-emptying act of faith, God is highly pleased with them.

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them. When they come to God, they should penitently say, Lord, we will not be saved out of thy way, we will not betake ourselves to indirect shifts, and unlawful means for salvation; our performances shall not save us, neither will we any more trust in duties, or say to the devoutest works of righteousness which our hands can perform, you are our confidence; for it is in thee only, as thou art a God reconciled in and thro' Christ, that the fatherless, abandoned, and forlorn find mercy. When they are thus humbly stooping at God's foot, he does not sit unmoved on his throne; but when they are groveling in the dust, his heart beats, and his bowels move towards them; when their empty souls are panting towards him, he is full of pity and infinite love towards them; and when they are lying low in the depth of self-abhorrence, he raises them by his powerful arm, hears all their prayers, and grants all such requests as may be for their good.

When believing sinners come to God, disclaiming all trust in themselves, he heals their backslidings: Sin is the disease of the rational creature, and God is the only physician who can apply a medicine to heal this inveterate malady. Backslidings are sins of the blackest nature, for they are wilful aversions from God, and bold rebellions against him: God has promised to heal backslidings, the greatest transgressions of believing sinners, to encourage

encourage sinners of all sorts to return to him; for if he has been graciously pleased to declare, that he will heal the most putrified sores, we may expect he will cure slighter wounds; and if he is so good as to forgive the greatest sins, surely he will pardon less crimes.

The reason why God heals the backslidings of believing sinners is, he loves them freely; for God to love sinners freely is for him to set his heart upon them, to give himself to them, and to lay out all the treasures and riches of his glory on them; God loves believing sinners freely, because he loves them without any desert and worth of their own, without limits, and without measure of time; he loves them from everlasting to everlasting. The motive of his love towards them is not in themselves, and it will eternally spring up, and flow out towards them; he can love them freely, because his anger is turned away from them, being appeased by Christ; and when it is thus, all that happens to them in this life is in good-will to them, and in the world to come eternity itself will be passed away in love and kindness between God and them.

When God loves believing sinners freely, and they upon their coming to him by faith in Christ, are made to partake of his free love, he will be a refreshing dew to them, to cause them to increase in all grace; when
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he is a dew to them, their wilderness shall be glad, and be overspread with living green, and their desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; they shall revive as the corn, they shall grow in beauty as the lily, and their fruit shall be increasing as that of the olive tree; they shall strike down their roots, and spread forth their branches, and shall rise in gracefulness as the goodly cedars, that tower on Lebanon's shady brow; and the perfume of their graces shall spread itself like the generous vine, which, blooming, diffuses a cordial and refreshing smell: No withering blasts shall entirely strip them of their verdure, but even to old age they shall be fat and flourishing; God will watch over them, and will night and day water them, that they need not fear the year of drought.

Faith which is the operation of God in the soul, is that only which can truly humble a sinner; Pride and unbelief are inseparable companions; for to be proud and faithless are one and the same thing. Gifts and knowledge will not humble a sinner, for where there are the greatest gifts, without faith they do but lift up; and there are many persons, whose heads are enriched, nay overstock'd with notional knowledge, where the devil's image, in its full length, is drawn upon the heart. Convictions, without faith, will not lay a sinner low, for they may sting his conscience, and distract his spirits, and yet leave his

his heart unbroke, and full of unrelenting hardness. Duties, ordinances, and spiritual privileges, without faith, will not render a sinner contrite; for whilst he is taken up in the formal part of them, he grows more conceited and haughty, and his lifeless duties serve for a nourishment to corruption, and embolden him to say with an insolent air, God I thank thee, that I am not as others. Afflictions without faith will not cast down a sinner, his flesh may be tore, and yet his heart not rent; he may be brought very low, and not be made meek in spirit; he may be very indigent, and yet be far from poverty of spirit; the greatest pride may^d lurk under a tatter'd coat, and the most old-fashion'd garment, as well as under the gay and fantastical habit of the most janty fop. A sinner may, as it were, pass thro' deaths many, and yet the diabolical lust of pride may live and thrive in him. We must necessarily become like little children

^d Socrates manifested a good knowledge of human nature, in this matter; he was forced to wear a ragged cloak, because by reason of poverty he was not able to afford a better; one of his scholars, Antisthenes, upon this took it in his head to imitate his master, and attended his lectures in a tatter'd garment, who took no notice of his vanity at first, but upon his repeating his foolish affectation, wisely said, that he saw his pride thro' the rents of his cloak.

Σόκρας ἄνθρωπος τὸ διέρρωγος ἔ τριῶνος εἰς τοῦμφανὲς ὁρᾷ σκ, ἔφη, 2/4 τῶ τριῶνος κενδοξίαν vel φιλοδοξίαν. Diogenes Laertius lib. II. §. 36. p. 102. Edit. Amst. lib. VI. §. 8. p. 320.

Ο Σωκράτης, ἰδὼν τὸν Ἀντισθένην τὸ διέρρωγος ἱμάτιον μίτρος αἰεὶ ποιῶντα φανερόν· ἐπαύση, ἔφη, ἐγκαλλωπίζόμενος ἡμῶν. Aelian. Var. Hist. lib. IX. c. 35. p. 481, 582. Edit. Perizon.

for meekness, lowliness, and humility, before we can enter into the kingdom of heaven; and there is nothing that can humble us, but the grace of faith.

Every one who has experienced in himself a work of grace, emptying him of all conceit of his own worth, may take comfort in it, as a proof of his faith. Christians are often forward to call their faith into question, because they are not sensible of any returns of comfort, after they have endeavoured to believe, and cannot say they have fully closed with Christ, and reposed their trust in him: Such begin wrong, and pass over what is the root of all, the self-emptying act of faith; if they have not put forth this, all their acts of faith are dubious; and if they have, they are in Christ, and are blessed, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Our Lord has bestowed his blessing on the poor in spirit, when he^e said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This may rejoice all drooping believers; they may be kept in suspense about their faith, and may have thousands of fears and jealousies concerning it, but if they can say, they look upon their own righteousnesses as filthy rags, if they abhor themselves in the sight of God, for their sinful defilements, if they lie low at the foot of their sovereign Judge, if

^e Matt. v. 3.

a sour conceited spirit has no place in them; and if they trust in the righteousness of Christ alone for justification, they have no need to despond any longer, for they are real believers; a blessed work is begun in them, which God will take care to bring to perfection, and the kingdom of heaven is as much theirs, as if they actually possessed the pleasures with which it abounds.

C H A P. III.

Of looking to Christ by Faith.

WHEN a sinner is convinced of the misery of his state and frame, and is made sensible, that destruction is his just demerit; and when he is beat off from high conceits of his own worth and fulness, and is brought to acknowledge the insufficiency of his own righteousness, it is not possible for him to be without an anxious concern about what he is to look to, for life and salvation; from himself salvation can never spring, it must therefore come by the means of another, who may have merit and power to procure it for him, and secure it to him. Therefore when faith is wrought in his heart, by the Holy Spirit, Christ is revealed to him, as the only person appointed by God, to save sinners, and as one who alone is able to accomplish

comply with this great work; his desires are taken off from all other things, and his faith, with eager longing eyes, looks to a crucified dying Jesus, expecting a blessing from him the Lord of life, and righteousness in him the God of salvation.

When faith looks to Christ, it looks to him as the person deputed and appointed of God, to save sinners. When man had lost himself by the fall, and when he was strip'd of his strength, and disrobed of his primitive attire of righteousness, God, having purposed to make known the riches of his grace, in the recovery of a remnant of the apostate seed of Adam, would not bring this about, by injuring any of his perfections, in order to exalt his mercy; but chose and appointed Christ to be the surety of the elect, that by dying for sin, he might rescue from condemnation such as had destroyed themselves, that so justice might be satisfied at the same time mercy is manifested to the utmost. God chose, and set up Christ to be the Restorer of lost man; and in conformity to what God has done, faith chooses Christ as a Saviour, and looks to him as the great and mighty Redeemer, on whom God has laid help for the feeble and impotent. God declared thus, with relation to his putting his peoples concerns into the hands of Christ, "I have laid help on one that is

† Psalm lxxxix, 19.

mighty."

mighty." This was true in some sense of David, but is true, in a much more eminent sense, of his great Son and Lord, of whom he was but a type. God the Father did not make the Son mighty, that he might lay help upon him, but he laid it on him, because he was mighty in power, and had strength to perfect the work of a surety and mediator. The Son of God, as he was possessed of infinite powers, was mighty, to break the bands of death, to fulfil the curse and condemning sentence of the law, to close the mouth of hell, and to open the gate of heaven; and because he was thus mighty, the Father left all the work of redemption to him.

God's laying help on Christ, because he was mighty to discharge the trust reposed in him, supposes him to be ordained and chose by the Father to be the surety of sinners; and faith carefully looks to the appointment of God concerning Christ, or the constitution of Christ to be a Saviour; for if a sinner had not ground to believe, that Christ is set up by God, to redeem and restore such as are in misery, he could have no encouragement to look to him, or to expect salvation from him. Faith looks to Christ as one come from God, and it is with all believers, as it was with the disciples of our Lord, whose faith he describes in ^b the following words, "The Father him-
self

^b Πειθίσιναι ὅτι ἐγὼ παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐξῆλθον. John xvi. 27.

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self loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from God." The apostles believed that Christ was the only person commissioned by God to be the true Messiah, and was sent by him into the world, to seek and save such as are lost. The words of Christ are as if he had spoke to this effect, "I need not tell you for the begetting in you a confidence that your prayers shall be heard, that I will pray to the Father for you; for the Father himself has such a love for you, that you may conclude he will hear you; and tho' his love towards you is from everlasting, and without any meritorious cause in you, yet in the external manifestations of it, it is drawn out towards you, because of that stirring lively affection which he sees in you towards me; and because you have believed me to be the true Messiah, come forth from him, and sent by him, to recover fallen man, and to finish the work of redemption.

It is one part of saving faith to know surely, that Christ came from God, and to believe that God sent him. Thus Christ spoke to his Father, concerning his followers on

This expression seems to be used in the same sense with that of Philostratus, where speaking of the disciples of Pythagoras, he says, they venerated their master as one come from God :

Ὅτι λαοφύλατος ὁ Πυθαγόρας, νόμον τῆτο οἱ ὁμιλήται ἠγάουντο, καὶ ἐτίμων αὐτὸν ὡς ἐκ Διὸς ἕκοντα. Philost. Vit. Apollon. lib. I. c. 1. p. 2, Edit. Lips.

John xvii. 8.

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earth,

earth, " They have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou hast sent me." Faith looks to Christ as one who came warranted with a commission, and invested with a legal authoritative deputation from the Father; it looks to him bruised on the cross, for sins not his own, by the pleasure of the Lord of all; and it ventures on him as a Saviour, because the Father has set him forth, and appointed him to be a propitiation for transgression, or to do away guilt by the sacrifice of himself. A Christian may then look to Christ as a Saviour, without fear of being disappointed, for certainly he whom the God of truth sanctified, and sent into the world, is the only person who is constituted a Prince and a Saviour, to grant repentance to Israel, and the remission of sins, to abolish death, and to bring life and immortality to light, to all who sincerely look to him.

Tho' Faith is highly concerned to look to Christ, as a Saviour sent and appointed by God to rescue sinners, yet this is not all that it looks to in Christ, for it looks to him as the only person who can carry away sin, and can satisfy God's justice, by bearing the weight of his infinite wrath. As Christ is an infinite person, he was able to stand under the weight of the Father's anger, and could quench the fire of vindictive justice; accordingly when he is introduced by the ^d evangelic-

^d Isa. xlv. 21, 22.

cal prophet, inviting sinners to look to him, the argument he uses to persuade them to their duty was, his being God. His words are these, "There is no God else besides me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none besides me; look then to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else." Well might sinners from all the ends of the earth be called upon to trust in this great Saviour; for seeing he is God, besides whom there is none else, one in nature, power, and perfection with the Father who sent him, there can no difficulty attend the work of redemption, which can be supposed to be too great for him to grapple with; therefore let the burden of the guilt of elect sinners be ever so heavy, it is not too heavy for his shoulders to bear, who upholds all things by his almighty power; but he is able to bear away sin into the land of forgetfulness.

When the great harbinger of our Lord casually saw the mighty Saviour, whom he came to proclaim, walking at some distance from him, he thus ^c addressed himself to such as were

^c Ἀπὸν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν τῷ κόσμῳ. John i. 29.

The word ἀπὸν includes in it the idea of Christ's taking up the sins of his people, as well as carrying it away; and it is used in the same sense in other places of Scripture.

Επὶ χειρῶν ἀρῆσίν σα. Matth. iv. 6.

Τῷτον ἡγάρευσαν ἵνα ἄρῃ τὸ σκυρὸν αὐτοῦ. xxvii. 32.

In this sense it is used by other authors.

Τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἔτι ἐμπνέοντα καταλαβὼν αἵρεται. Dionys. Halic. Antiq. lib. ix. c. 11. p. 545. Edit. Oxon.

were about him; "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world." Contrite sinners ought to look to Christ as taking up sin, and bearing it in order to satisfy for it, and so to carry away the punishment which is due to it. This is done when a sinner by faith has Christ represented to him in his suffering posture, and sees him as really employed in taking up sin, and carrying it away, as if he had stood under the cross, and had beheld him hanging there, groaning under the weight of the guilt of all the elect world.

As faith looks to Christ, as taking up, and bearing away the sin of the elect world, so it looks to him as the only person that has infinite power to bear sin, and to endure the punishment of it. None but Christ could bear the weight of sin, and none but he could endure, in a little time, all the punishment due to it, and so satisfy for all the injuries done to the holiness of God: All this he actually did, that the flames of divine wrath having center'd in his soul, the floods of divine mercy might stream out towards us: Christ was not in the least spared, but felt the utmost

Εν ᾧ, καὶ βούλονται ἀρᾶσθαι. Aelian. Var. Hist. lib. iii. c. 22. p. 235. Ed. Perizon.

Αὐτὸν ἦσαν ἰσὺς τὰ γούνατα καὶ ἐλθὼν ἀράμενος ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄμω
ἔφην. Idem ibid. lib. xii. 22. p. 696.

Αράμενος ἐβάδιζε διὰ τοῦ ποταμοῦ. Polyæn. lib. viii. c. 44.

Τὴν μὲν πλὴν ἀράμενος κακομίζουσι. Herodian. lib. iv. c. 2.

Αράμενος τὸ πᾶσι ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄμω ἀνάγει. Idem lib. vii. c. 15.

and

and the highest degree of severity; for the sword of justice was never brandished with the full force of God's arm, 'till it was caused to awake against him who was his equal, and so was able to stand in the place of sinners. This deeply inflicted stroke was soon over; for the infinite dignity of Christ's person, as he was God, made it impossible for him to lie under an eternity of punishment, because he fully satisfied at once; and having made full satisfaction at once, justice in its strictness and perfection could demand no more of him. Christ had not the punishment of sin in its eternal duration inflicted on him, but he endured it in its full measure and weight; for God made him endure all the fire of his wrath, and spent all his arrows upon him, when it pleased him to wound and bruise him for our transgressions, and to put him to grief for our iniquities.

When a sinner by faith looks to Christ, he looks at him principally as dying on the cross, but he has a respect to all his sufferings, which were preparatory to the direful close of his life. He views him as coming into the world in a mean form, and with wonder thinks that the King of glory, who rides on the heavens, and makes the clouds his chariots, should condescend to be born in a stable, and to lie in a manger: He sees him hurried into the wilderness, and exposed to the temptation of an insolent apostate spirit, and

is surprized at the patience of the Lord of glory, to suffer himself to be insulted by that bold rebel, whom he had thrown from the height of heaven, by the thunder of his power, when first he lifted up his sacrilegious hand against him: He beholds him who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, enduring the contradiction of sinners, grieved in his spotless soul at their hardness and impenitence; and him who went about doing good, reproached and despised, and represented as an impostor and a false prophet, a glutton and a drunkard, a madman and an enthusiast; and he admires at his long-suffering, that he should bear such things, from those who, with the greatest justice, may be stiled the scum of the earth, and the refuse of all things, when with a look he could have frowned his persecutors dead: He traces him in his weary steps, and is astonished that he, who had all nature at his command, should stoop so low, as to endure hunger and thirst, and be exposed to watchings and weariness, and wander about without a friend or home.

A sinner regards Christ in the several periods of his life of humiliation, and likewise in the preparatives for his shameful and painful death. He, by faith, views him in his direful agony in the garden, and is satisfied his pain must be great, which made him^f say,

^f Mark xiv. 24.

“ My

“ My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even to death ; ” and, § “ Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ; ” nay it must be unspeakable, seeing it forced the blood in great drops thro’ the pores of his body, when he was lying on the damp ground, in a cold night : He sees him betrayed by one intimate friend, forsaken by all the rest, and hurried by a noisy and tumultuous rabble before an unjust judge : He beholds him receiving all kinds of insults, with a temper of spirit that well became the pattern of meekness, and admires that patience which he shewed under all sorts of abuses, such as being charged with blasphemy against God, and treason against the state, the offer of his release being with scorn rejected, and a seditious robber and murderer being prefer’d ; and his being scourged, arrayed as a mock-king, buffeted, spit upon, and scornfully bid to prophecy : All this is, with religious surprise, regarded by every one who beholds the Lamb of God, who endured it for the sins of the world.

That which a sinner above all looks to in Christ, is his bloody death, and his exquisite sufferings ; he by faith travels with him to mount Calvary, and views him bearing his cross, ’till he fainted under it ; and beholds him fastened between two thieves, as if he had been the greatest transgressor, to the ac-

§ Matth. xxvi. 39.

curled tree; which death of the cross, as it was painful and lingering, so it was of all deaths the most shameful, being ^h inflicted only

^h The shame of this death was so great, that it was not according to law to be inflicted on Roman citizens; therefore when Galba the emperor, a man of severe justice, condemn'd one to the cross, for the execrable villany of poisoning a youth for whom he was left in trust, he complained of it as a great breach of the law.

Tutorem quod pupillum, cui substitutus haeres erat, veneno necasset, cruce affecit; implorantique leges & civem Romanum se testificanti quasi solatio & honore aliquo poenam levaturus, mutari, multoque praeter caeteras altiore, & dealbatam statui crucem iussit. Suetonius in Galba. cap.9. p.572. Ed. Graev. p. 857. Ed. Pitisc.

As this death was not to be inflicted on Roman citizens, when Verres had caused one free of the city to be crucified, it was severely aggravated, and that with admirable eloquence, by his great prosecutor Cicero.

Quid ego de Publio Gavio Cosano munice dicam, iudices? aut qua vi vocis, qua gravitate verborum, quo dolore animi dicam? — Verres inflammatus scelere & furore in forum venit. Ardebant oculi, toto ex ore crudelitas eminebat. — repente hominem proripi atque in foro medio nudari ac deligari, & virgas expediri jubet: Clamabat ille miser se civem esse Romanum. — Caedebatur virgis in medio foro civis Romanus, iudices. Cum interea nullus gemitus, nulla vox alia istius miseri, inter dolorem crepitumque plagarum audiebatur, nisi haec, civis Romanus sum. Hac se commemoratione civitatis omnia verbera depulsurum, cruciatumque a corpore dejecturum arbitrabatur. Is non modo hoc non perfecit, ut virgarum vim deprecaretur: sed cum imploraret saepius, usurparetque nomen civitatis, crux, crux, inquam, infelici & aerumnoso, qui nunquam istam potestatem viderat, comparabatur. O nomen dulce libertatis! O jus eximium nostrae civitatis! — Hucne tandem omnia reciderunt, ut civis Romanus, in provincia populi Romani, — ab eo qui beneficio populi Romani fascis & sceures haberet, deligatus in foro virgis caederetur? Quid cum ignes ardentesque laminae, caeterique cruciatus admovebantur? Si te illius acerba imploratio & vox miserabilis non inhibebant, ne civium quidem Romanorum, qui tum aderant, fletu & gemitu maximo commovebare? In crucem

only on slaves, and the dregs of mankind: He considers, that not one part, nor one sense, was free from annoyance; his body was distorted, his head was tore with thorns, his sides and back were furrowed with scourgings; for on him the plowers had made long their furrows, and the nails, that fastened him to the accursed tree, were driven into the most nerve and sinewy parts of his body, his hands and feet, where the sense of feeling is quickest, and where the pain is lengthened out, by their being farthest from the seat of life; at the same time that his limbs were stretched on the cross, and every part of his body was full of exquisite pain, his taste was disturbed with gall and vinegar, his smell was annoyed by the loathsome place in which he was, where, it being the place of execution, many carcases were left to rot in the open air, his eyes beheld only sorrowful and moving sights, such as his enemies wagging their heads at him, and his mother and his beloved disciple weeping by him; and his ears were offended with the blasphemous taunts of the insolent priests, the brutish soldiers, and enraged multitude. A

crucem tu ausus es quenquam, qui se civem Romanum esse diceret. Cicero in Verrem, lib. V. c. 61, 62, 63. Vol. II. p. 406, 407, 408, 409. Ed. Graev.

All that part of the oration which relates to this affair, (cap. 61—68.) deserves the perusal of every one who desires to see as noble a specimen of just oratory, as any can be found in that excellent author.

sinner,

sinner, when he looks by faith to a dying Saviour, remembers that all the pains he bore in his flesh, were little in comparison of the torments he endured in his soul; he there suffered the punishment of loss, being separated, as to his human nature, from his Father, for a season, which forced from him that rueful ⁱ outcry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me;" and he suffer'd the punishment of sense, in feeling the infinite wrath of God the Father in his soul; but as he was God as well as man, his divinity supported his humanity under its sufferings, and exempted him from endless punishment, because it furnished him with strength to endure a punishment infinite in measure, and enabled him, after all was accomplished, to commend his soul into the hands of his Father, with this triumphant ^k shout, "It is finished." He who looks to Christ does not leave him on the cross, but accompanies him to the silent grave, and with wonder sees the Prince of life submitting to the stroke of death, and laying down his head in the dust for a short season, that he might raise it with honour and triumph.

Tho' faith, as it is employed in ^l the justification of a sinner, looks to him only as a priest dying for sin, yet for its encouragement and support, it looks to him as risen and ex-

ⁱ Matth. xxvii. 46.
chap. 4.

^k John xix. 30.

^l See part I.

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alted. Faith views Christ rising from the grave, as the conqueror of death, and of him who had the power of death, with great glory; the earth ^m shook, when it was to give its mighty Maker out of its bowels, wherein he had been for a time confined; and for the greater solemnity, an angel with a face like lightening, and garments bright as light, roll'd back the stone which covered the mouth of the sepulchre, to let out his Lord, when he sprung from the bands of death, and had broke the barriers of the grave. Faith sees Christ ascending, in triumphant state, to his Father, leading captivity captive, and spoiling principalities and power, with his heavenly guards attending him, crying out, Lift up your heads, O you gates, and fly open, you everlasting doors, that the Lord of hosts, the Lord strong and mighty, the King of glory, returning from his conquest of death and hell, may enter into his Father's kingdom, to prepare mansions of glory for his redeemed. Faith beholds Christ taking his seat at the right-hand of God, as a mark of his dignity, and of his having actually accomplished all required of him, and to promote the good of the church militant, and compleat the joy of the church triumphant; the members of which with pleasure cast their crowns before him, and with angels and arch-angels cry ⁿ out in tri-

^m Matth. xxviii. 2.

ⁿ Rev. v. 12.

umph,

umph, " Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Faith looks to him as interceding for his people, as a priest upon his throne, and powerfully pleading for their receiving all spiritual blessings here, and for their being safely conducted to glory and immortality; saying, with a noble air, and a strain of well-grounded authority, as he once ^o said on earth, " Father I will, that those whom thou hast given me be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." In fine, faith has a regard to Christ, as the person who is to judge the world in righteousness, and who will come with the clouds, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trumpet of God, to raise the dead, and to render to every man according to his works, and from a prospect that then all good will be enjoyed, when Christ says, Behold I come quickly, can answer, Even so come Lord Jesus.

When we look to Christ as dying for sin, and enduring so much smart and torture, and remember that our sins contributed to his pain; as we can never have mild thoughts of iniquity, for which he was wounded, so we cannot but be filled with godly sorrow for sin, on the account of which he was bruised

and put to grief. There is a gracious promise upon record, in Zechariah's prophecy, which has a reference to the sorrow which will fill the hearts of the obdurate Jews, when they come to be converted: It runs thus, "I will, says Jehovah, pour forth upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." When the posterity of those insolent Jews, who crucified the Lord of glory, have the spirit of grace given them, to look to him whom their fathers pierced, and whom their sin in some sense helped to pierce, they will bitterly bewail their transgressions, and they will be filled with godly sorrow, because of their sins; and not barely they, but all who look to a bleeding, dying Jesus, must mourn, because of what occasioned the death of the just one, and the shedding the precious blood of the Lamb that was without spot. When Christ actually suffered, things inanimate seem'd, as it were, to be affected with the sorrows of their great Master; the earth shook, the mountains totter'd, and the hills reel'd; the sun hid his face, and overspread the earth with darkness, and the veil of the

temple was rent asunder; in short nature was in an agony, as if it felt the pains of him who was the God of nature: What then are we, if we can hear of these things without sorrow for sin? Shall we be more senseless than flinty rocks? If we have a spark of generosity burning in our breasts, we shall hate and abhor all that contributed to the pain of our dying Jesus; and if we look to him in a way of believing, we shall not be backward to sacrifice the most beloved lust to his honour.

All such as look to Christ by faith, cannot but be filled with an ardent love to him. Christ has assured^a us, that, "Greater love has no man than this, that he lays down his life for his friends." It is the highest pitch friendship among men can reach to, that one friend should give his own life to save another: As such instances are exceeding uncommon, so if ever they happen, it must be supposed, that the person who gives his own life to save that of another, is under the highest obligations to him: Now Christ has not barely given his life for us, but he has done it, when by nature we are strangers to him, and enemies against him; and he has done it, that we might be delivered from enduring an eternity of woe, and might be brought to enjoy the most desirable pleasures and blef-

^a John xv. 13.

sings,

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sings, and that for ever. The consideration of the rich and free love, wherewith Christ loved us, which the waters of the most bitter death could not quench, of the terrible death from which we are thereby freed, and of the happy life which, on that account, we hope to enjoy, ought to rouse every grateful passion in our breasts, and should fill us with a reciprocal love to Christ, which may not only be strong as death, to kill every lust, and cruel as the grave, to consume every unruly corruption, but may be attended with a burning zeal, to promote his honour and glory in the world.

When our faith looks to Christ, as rising from the dead, ascending into heaven, and sitting at the right-hand of God, powerfully to intercede for his people, it may keep us from being overborne with slavish fears; for as the apostle Paul[†] argues, "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." If we look to Christ, as an all-sufficient and almighty Saviour, we shall not think any thing too hard for him to do; when he seemed to be at the lowest ebb, he gave amazing instances of his power; for when he hung upon the cross, he converted, and promised to conduct to glory, one who seemed to be in as good a

[†] Rom. v. 10.

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condition as himself; and when he bowed his head and died, he caused the bodies of many saints that slept to rise from their graves, to be the ensigns of his victory over death: He has not less power in his exalted state; therefore if we look to him by faith, let our corruptions be ever so strong, he is able to master them, and let our spiritual foes be ever so powerful, he is able to overmatch them: He can enable us to struggle with all the difficulties of life, and can strengthen us to encounter our last enemy, which is death: He can help us to pass through the gloomy vale, and to wade through the dark flood, and can conduct us safe within the confines of joy and peace, and put us in possession of the country of rest and pure delight: When we commit our earthly tabernacles to the grave, he will watch over our dust, and in the morning of the resurrection, will raise our vile bodies, and fashion them like to his glorious and immortal body, that in body and soul we may be for ever with him; and to eternity, with angels and archangels, may praise and adore him.

When a sinner by faith looks to Christ, he looks to him with concern, eagerness, and affection; he looks to him as we may suppose the stung Israelites did to the brazen serpent. To this Christ^f was pleased to compare him-

^f John iii. 14, 15.

self, in these words; "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ having spoke of the new birth, as necessary to salvation, afterwards instanced in the meritorious cause of salvation, which is his death, and the means of it, which is faith; and that he might bring sinners to have some notion what faith is, and how it is acted on a Redeemer, he refer'd them to the story of the brazen serpent, which was a significant *type of the justification of sinners by faith in Christ.

When the Israelites were stung with fiery serpents, Moses received a command from God, to make a serpent of brass for their healing; this bore the likeness of those noxious animals by which they were bit, but it had no poison inherent in it; it was set up, not to kill, but to cure; and it was raised high upon a pole, that it might be exposed to the view of all that needed to behold it: As it healed only those who saw it, we may easily suppose, that such as were stung looked towards it with concern, eagerness, and affection: They could expect healing from it by virtue of God's appointment, and it would have been strange had they neglected to look to it, seeing the serpents which stung them were so

* Numb. xxi. 8, &c.

high^t in their venom, that their bite was followed with drying up the moisture of the body

^t It is hard to determine of what particular sort of serpents these were, but it is most highly probable they were called fiery, because they fired the blood, and dried up all the moisture of the body; and more than one kind of such destroyers is elegantly described by the Poets.

Ναὶ μὲρ διψάδης ἰδὼς ὁμώσεται αἰὲν ἐχίδνῃ,
 Παιροτέρῃ θανάτου ἢ θοώτερος ἴζεται αἶσα
 Οἷσιν ἐπισκήψῃ βλόσυρον δάκος. ἦτοι αἶραι
 Αἰὲν ὑποζοφώσασα μελαίνετας ἄκροθεν ἐρή.
 Δήγματι δ' ἐμφλέγεται κραδίη πρόπαν· ἀμφὶ δ' αὖ καύσῃ
 Χυλὸς ὑπ' ἀζάλης ἀζαίνεται ἄερόχα διψῆς.
 Αὐτὰρ ὅγ' ἤντε ταῦρος ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο νενεκῶς
 Σανδὸν, ἀμέτρητον δέχεται ποτὸν, εἰσόκε νηδὺς
 Ομφαλὸν ἐκρήξει· χεῖρ δ' ὑπεράχθεια φόρτον.

Nicander Theriac. v. 334, &c.

Νῦν δ' ἄγε χερσὶνδροῖο καὶ ἄσπιδος ἔρει μορφᾶς
 Ἰσαίης· πληγὴ δ' κακὴδεα σήμαθ' ὁμαρτίῃ.
 Πᾶσα γὰρ αὐάλη ρινὸς πρὸς σάρκα μυσαράχθῃς
 Νείσθι πιτναμυρὴ μυδρὸν τεκμήρατο νύγμῃ,
 Σηπεδῶσι φλιδόωσα τὰ δ' ἄλγεια φῶτα δαμάσσει
 Μυρία πυρπολίσοντα· θοῶς δ' ἐπὶ γυῖα χέονται
 Πρηδόνες, ἄλλοθεν ἄλλαι ἐπημοῖβοι κλονίουσαι.
 Ος δὲ τοι τὸ πρὶν μὲν ἐπὶ βροχθώδεϊ λίμνῃ
 Ἀσπίσιν βατράχοισι φέροι κότον· ἀλλ' ὅταν ὕδωρ
 Σείριος ἀζήνησι, τρύγῃ δ' ἐπὶ πυθμῶνι λίμνης,
 Καὶ τοῦτ' ὅγ' ἐν χερσὶν τελέθει ψαφάρὸς τε καὶ ἄχρους,
 Θάλπων ἡλίου βλοσυρὸν δέμας· ἐν δ' ἐκλειυτοῖς
 Γλώσση πομφύγδην νέμεται διψήρεας ὄγμους.

Idem ibid v. 359, &c.

Signiferum, juvenem, Tyrrheni sanguinis, Aulum
 Torta caput retro Dipfas calcata momordit.
 Vix dolor aut sensus dentis fuit; ipsaque leti
 Fronis caret invidia; nec quidquam plaga minatur.
 Ecce subit virus tacitum, carpitque medullas
 Ignis edax, calidaque incendit viscera tabe.
 Ebibit humorem, circum vitalia fusum,
 Pestis, & in sicco linguam torrere palato
 Coepit; defessos iret qui sudor in artus,
 Non fuit, atque oculos lacrymarum vena refugit.
 Non decus imperii, non moesti jura Catonis

Ardentem

dy in a litte time, and caused a fire to burn in the flesh, and the person to languish under intolerable pain, if he looked not to the brazen serpent.

It may be proper now to consider, how this is a type of our looking to Christ by faith; when we are scorched with guilt, which like a fire burns in our souls, God presents us with Christ as a fit remedy, whose blood quenches the fire of justice, and quiets conscience: This mighty Redeemer appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, but without the serpentine nature which is in our flesh, and when the hour was come, he was lifted up in his death on the cross; he is exposed to view in the publication of the Gospel that sinners may look to him; and he saves all who look to him by faith, but will never save any, who neither know him, nor look to him by believing. There is the highest reason that a sinner should look to Christ, for when a spark

*Ardentem tenuere virum, quin spargere signa
Auderet, totisque furens exquireret agris,
Quas poscebat, aquas, sitiens in corde venenum.
Ille vel in Tanain missus, Rhodanumque, Padumque,
Arderet, Nilumque bibens, per rura vagantem.
Accessit morti Libye, fatigue minorem
Famam Dipsas habet, terris adjuta perustis.
Scrutatur venas penitus squalentis harenæ:
Nunc redit ad Syrtes, & fluctus accipit ore;
Aequoreusque placet, sed non & sufficit, humor.
Nec sentit fatigue genus, mortemque veneni;
Sed putat esse sitim: ferroque aperire tumētes
Sustinuit venas, atque os implere cruore.*

Lucan. ix. 737, &c.

of God's justice catches hold of his guilty conscience, his soul becomes like a fiery oven, and he feels in himself something of the heat of hell; this flame will burn hotter and hotter, and his pain will increase if he does not look to Christ; by casting an eye to a dying Saviour he only can be delivered from the venom of sin, and from the burning which his guilty conscience, being impressed with God's wrath, kindles in him. When a sinner has a sight of his wretched deplorable condition, and trembles under the fears of a fiery indignation, he looks to Christ with concern, knowing that the eternal welfare of his soul depends on it; with eagerness, reckoning himself irrecoverably lost if he does not look to him; and with affection, because he desires him more than life, and the whole world cannot satisfy him without a Redeemer.

Sinners ought to view the way of salvation, which God has found out for them, with a thankful admiration; he has taken care to do all for them, because they can do nothing for themselves. It is a look to Christ that saves, and this is the free gift of God; this then may justly afford the greatest encouragement to all who are sensible of their misery, and know they cannot save themselves. Christ as he is the only Saviour, so he is the true immutable God; therefore as he has promised that such as look to him shall be saved, sinners ought not to question his truth, or his ability to perform.

perform his promise : When they are compassed about with darkness, and have thick mists before their eyes, if they look to Christ they shall be enlighten'd: When they are stung with convictions of guilt, and are afraid of condemnation, if they view Christ dying, he will pardon and justify them : When their strength fails, and they are sensible how weak they are to master and overcome their corruptions, and are terrified with the thoughts of falling under the fury of God's wrath, if they lift up their eyes to Christ exalted, he will cleanse and renew them, and he will be a strong hold to defend them, a fountain of life to revive them, and a rock to screen and shade them from the burning heat.

C H A P. IV.

Of flying by Faith to Christ for Refuge.

AS long as a man is left to himself, and under the reign of natural darkness, tho' his state is most unsafe, and he is exposed to the greatest of all dangers, nay is liable to eternal death, and to a destruction which will never end, yet he is not sensible of his misery nor is he apprehensive of his danger; he considers not where his way lies, nor what his end will be; he can lie down

and sleep, as securely as if he was laid in beds of roses, when every moment he may awake in the midst of everlasting burnings; and he can walk forward with as serene a temper of mind, as if his way lay only thro' painted meadows, and by purling streams, when every step he takes he may fall into the bottomless pit of eternal perdition; his inward quiet does not spring from the safety of his state, but from his being ignorant of his condition, and consequently insensible of his danger; therefore when he is warned to take care of his immortal soul, before it is too late, he turns a deaf ear to all exhortations: If he is advised to fly to Christ for help, he flights such counsel, because he either thinks he does not need help, or that his help is in himself; and tho' the gates of a city of refuge are set open to him, yet he will not cast so much as an eye towards them. The blindness of sinners is so great, that they will not see how unsafe a state of separation from Christ is; and their stupidity is such, that tho' a refuge is provided for all who fly from danger, where they may meet with ease and rest, and a sure retreat from the eager pursuit of the avenger of crimes, and a way is opened to it, yet they choose rather to continue in the paths of sin, where no true ease can attend them, nor any real rest can be their happy lot, but where they may every moment be arrested by incensed justice, and made to feel
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what a dreadful thing it is to fall into the hand of an angry God.

When once sinners are, by the Holy Spirit, convinced of the misery of their state by nature, and of the danger they are in, by reason of their being exposed to the divine displeasure; and when Christ is revealed to them, as their help and Saviour, as they look to him dying for sin, with eager longing eyes, so he is the person to whom they run by faith for shelter and safety: To him they fly, to lay hold on the hope of eternal life, which is set before them. When convinced sinners have the hearing ear given them, when ever the Spirit by the word says ^a to them, "Fly from the wrath to come," they are ready to enquire whither they must fly, and to what they must betake themselves for shelter: Now it is only to Christ that they must run with speed, he is appointed ^b as "a tabernacle for a shadow from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and a covert from the storm and the rain." He will be ^c to such as run to him "a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." He is the strong ^d hold, to which all prisoners of hope should turn themselves; and when they have

^a Matt. iii. 7.

^b Isa. iv. 6.

^c Isa. xxxii. 2.

^d Zech. ix. 12.

turned themselves to this strong hold, "they shall dwell on high, and the place of their defence shall be the munitions of rocks, bread shall be given them, their waters shall be sure." And in ^f Christ their God they have a strong city, and salvation will he appoint, far more than what can be attained by walls and bulwarks. Sinners then ought with speed to fly to Christ, and if by faith they betake themselves to him, he will be a cloud to shade them, that the heat of God's anger may not faint them, nor the lightening of his displeasure blast them; he will be a rock to cover and screen them, that the rain of God's threatenings may not drive against them, nor the storm of his fury break them, nor the hail of his wrath beat upon them; and he will be to them a strong fortress, and a secure city for them to inhabit, where spiritual refreshments shall never fail them, but a plentiful provision of all things, relating to the support of their souls, shall be allotted them, till they come to eat and drink in the presence of their king, in the city of pure delight which is above.

The cities of refuge, ^g which were appointed by God under the law, for offending persons to fly to, shadow out to us what Christ is to sinners; and the running of guilty per-

^e Isa. xxxiii. 16.

^f If. xlvii. 1.

^g Concerning these cities of refuge, see Numb. xxxv. 13, 14, 15. Deut. xix. 1—6. Josh. xx. 2—5.

sons to them is a natural emblem of their flying to him by faith. When God appointed cities of refuge, he by a special order provided, that there should be a plain way leading to every such city, that a person who had killed his neighbour by accident, and without forethought or malice prepense, might not be at a loss to find his way, when he fled to any of them for refuge; and the criminal was obliged to keep in the right way, for had he wander'd from it, he would have perished: The delinquent was obliged to fly, with the utmost dispatch, because he brought his own blood upon his head, if he was killed by the avenger of blood, either by his neglecting to run to the city of refuge, or by his loitering by the way; when he got to the city of his refuge, it was a place of safety and security to him, whilst he staid in it, but not if he stroll'd at a distance from it, during the time prefix'd for his abode in it.

The account we have of the cities of refuge, has some tendency to explain to us, the mystery of a sinner's running by faith to Christ, the true city of refuge. Was there a way marked out, that he who had shed blood unwarily might, with more ease, find a place of shelter? answerable to this, there is in the Gospel a way discover'd for every sinner, to guide him to Christ; and this tells him, it is only by faith he can fly to him. Was the criminal bound to keep in the right way, which

which led to the city, to which he bent his course? Agreeable to this, when a guilty sinner runs to Christ, he must believe the promises, and must fly to his Saviour in a way of believing; this is the right way; but if he steps out of it, and turns to any false path of his own inventing, he will but lose and weary himself in perpetual intanglements. Did the offender bring his death upon himself, if he either omitted to fly to the city of refuge, or linger'd in his running to it, and thereby gave an opportunity to his pursuer to destroy him? Consonant to this, every sinner that refuses or neglects to run to Christ, involves himself in the guilt of destroying his own soul, and adds the sin of unbelief to all his other sins. Was the city of refuge a secure retreat to the criminal, while he contentedly staid in it? In conformity to this, Christ is a sure defence for ever, to every sinner that runs to him: In one respect indeed he differs from the cities of refuge; he is not a screen for a settled number of years, but is an everlasting defence to all who come to him by believing; but in another view, they bear some resemblance of him, as out of him there can be no preservation for a guilty sinner, for the avenger will overtake him, and the sword of justice will cut him off.

Jesus our Redeemer is a sure refuge to a sinner, and he must, with a quick motion, run towards him, and fly to him for life: Every
sinner

sinner may properly be said to be a wilful murderer, for tho' he impotently attempts it, yet he does as much as he can towards the destroying the honour and perfections of God; this heinous intentional crime is followed with the accusation of Satan, the condemnation of the law, and the pursuit of God's injured justice; and when, for his attempt to destroy the best of all beings, he is accused by Satan, sentenced by the law, and pursued by divine justice, his destruction is unavoidable, and his escape impossible, if there is none to appear on his behalf, to answer the accusations of Satan, to abrogate the condemning sentence of the law, and to stop the justice of God, in its swift and avengeful pursuit: When a sinner considers this, and is at the same time told, that Christ is his only hiding place, where no accusations will stick upon him, where no condemning sentence will be pronounced against him, and where the justice of God will never reach him; he flies to Jesus as his sole refuge, and takes shelter in him as a fortress impregnable to all foes. When the Holy Spirit shews a sinner his miserable condition, and gives him a prospect of Christ as a city of refuge, he speaks to him, as the destroying angels, who came down to execute God's vengeance on Sodom, said ^h to Lot, who was to be spared, "Escape for thy life, look

^h Gen. xix. 17,

not behind thee, escape to the mountain, lest thou art consumed." The Holy Spirit speaks to a sinner to this purpose; Fly for thy life, look not back on the enticing lusts, the charming pleasures, or the gay delusions of this world, but run to Christ, whom I set before thee as a mountain for strength, and a fortress for defence; make haste to him, for if thou slackenest thy pace, or triflest away thy time, the fire of justice will be kindled against thee, to consume thee from the way. This is the tendency of what the Spirit speaks to a sinner; and when he gives him the hearing ear, and the considering heart, to obey his voice, he flies to Christ by faith for refuge.

When a sinner runs to Christ by faith, he does it with a quick pace, and with strength of resolution: These properties of New Testament converts were foretold during the Old Testament dispensation, under very beautiful metaphors, by the Evangelical prophet, who in an elegant rapture cried out, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?" The quick motion of a sinner to Christ may be compared to that of a cloud, and of doves retiring to their windows: A cloud, when it is driven by a strong wind, flies with almost indiscernible swiftness, and the harmless doves, when they see the rave-

nous hawk fousing down upon them, fly with the utmost speed to their windows, and the clefts of the rocks: Thus when sinners are warned to fly from the wrath to come, and from the fearful storm of God's displeasure, which is ready to fall upon them, when they see an angry God, with wrath in his look, and lightening in his hand, when they descry the armies of hell marching towards them, and the princes of darkness ready to devour them; and when they are brought to groan under the weight of their sins, and to tremble at the sight of that gulf of misery which lies before them, as soon as Christ is presented to the view of their faith, as a city of refuge, or a place of safety, they with haste and speed, and winged desires run to him. As sinners run with a quick pace to Christ, so they do it with a strength of resolution; no discouragements, temptations, or impediments can divert their course, and turn them back: They can no more be stop'd, than the flying clouds can be pent up, or than doves can be prevented from spreading their wings in the open air. When a man is pursued by a roaring lion, he will not sit down by the way, because he flies for his life; thus a sinner, when he sees a flood of wrath following him, which will swallow him up, if he does not get to Christ the city of refuge, runs towards him with a strength of resolution, and will not be obstructed in his motion: If friends go about, by
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smooth words and flattering speeches, to stop his course, he rejects them as the missionaries of hell; if wicked men endeavour, by threatenings and punishments, to take him off from his purpose, he slights their menaces, and despises their tortures; if the world courts his stay, he rejects its offers with indignation; nay, if Satan opposes his progress, he resists him with a vigorous resolution, and becomes more than a conqueror thro' him who loved him: These obstructions can no more tie him up from going to Christ, when he once begins to run towards him, than the green withs which bound the mighty Sampson, could hold him fast, when he rose up and shook himself, whilst the spirit was upon him; for when a sinner runs to Christ by faith, he is drawn by no less than the irresistible force of the almighty power of the eternal Spirit.

Seeing it is by faith that sinners can fly to Christ, from the offended justice of God, they ought carefully to attend to, and comply with every call given them to fly to Christ, the great city of refuge. As long as life lasts they have time and leisure to escape; but they ought to consider, that they are encircled with a bottomless sea of wrath, and every moment of their lives that passes unimproved, the nearer the waves of the sea of wrath are rolling towards them; if they neglect the only way of escape, which is by running to Christ, the billows of the high sea of God's displeasure,

displeasure, which are now tumbling towards them, will overspread and cover them, and they must be drowned in wrath without recovery: They ought then, shaking off all sloth, to stir up themselves, and with a vigorous speed and strength of resolution, to fly for their lives, especially seeing if they will not fly for refuge to the hope set before them, their sin will find them out, and take hold of them; and then the redemption of their souls will cease for ever, and they will be plunged in an abyss of misery, where will be everlasting lamentations, and mournings, and woe.

C H A P. V.

Of receiving Christ by Faith.

WHEN a sinner, upon feeling a burden of guilt lying on him, which he is not able to bear, and has not power to throw off, is brought to look to Christ, and from a sense of his danger is inclined to fly to him for refuge, he at the same time closes with him, and receives him as his only Saviour; and when by faith he receives Christ, a spiritual union passes between Christ and him. This union is not a personal union, so as to make believers one person with Christ, as some freakish enthusiasts have been thought ridiculously to have pretended; for then such
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as are united to Christ, would have no proper subsistence distinct from Christ; and they would have no acts, dispositions, and operations that might properly be called their own. This fancy is so absurd, that it can hardly be thought any persons in their senses can fall into it: If any have asserted it, they must be wretchedly ignorant of Christ's excellencies, and must forget what themselves are; did they but consider their own unavoidable frailties, they would soon be cured of this frenzy. Christians are united mystically to Christ their head; this is a mystery that has a glory in it, for the apostle Paul has ^a declared, that Christ's being in his people was a glorious mystery. Believers are in Christ, and he is in them, for thus he said ^b to his disciples, "Abide in me, and I will abide in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abides in the vine, no more can you, except you abide in me; I am the vine, you are the branches; he that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit, for without me you can do nothing." This union is close, for it is as that of the branches to the vine; hence they are called by his name, and being ^c joined to the Lord they

^a The mystery which had been hid from ages and generations now is made manifest to the saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory, Col. i. 26, 27. ^b John xv. 4, 5. ^c 1 Cor. vi. 17.

are one spirit, not in a personal sense, but the same grace for kind, tho' not in degree, which is in Christ mediator, is in them; and the same spirit which dwells in the man Christ Jesus, dwells in them. By this union a new life is communicated to sinners, and they are incorporated with Christ as a head. Union with Christ is not for a little time, for it is not to be dissolved; indeed the sensible benefits and comforting influences of it may, for a time, be not perceived, but the thing itself abides for ever, because the duration of it depends solely on the will of Christ, whose will is immutable, and whose power is almighty; as no new thing can start up, to divert him from his purpose, seeing he is of one mind towards his people, and changes not; so he is almighty in power, to keep them close to him, and he is infinitely stronger than any enemy, who may endeavour to pluck them out of his hand; therefore this union between him and his people can never be dissolved, because it depends on him whose will is invariable, and whose arm is omnipotent and irresistible.

The Holy Spirit is the bond of union between Christ and the soul, for the apostle Paul ^d has declared, that "If any man has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his; if Christ is in us, the body is dead, because

^d Rom. viii. 9, 10.

of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness." The Holy Spirit joins us to Christ, and works faith in our hearts, to receive and embrace him. As faith is wrought in the heart by the Spirit, when he unites us to Christ, it cannot be said to be the cause of our union to Christ, nor can it properly be said to be before it.

There would be no reason nicely to enquire, whether union to Christ is first, or faith in him, were all agreed to abase the creature, and to exalt the Redeemer; however as men are too prone to set up something in themselves, as contributing by way of effiçience to their salvation, it is much the safest to say, that union with Christ precedes faith; but then it must only be meant, that it is first in order of nature; for we must never say, that when any are united to Christ, they are left one hour in a state of unbelief, but we must affirm, they are enabled to believe the very moment they are united to him. If any say, that a man may be united to Christ, and yet continue in his sin and unbelief, they turn the grace of God into wantonness; but so long as it is constantly affirmed, that all who are united to Christ, upon that union immediately and constantly believe in him, and turn from all sin to holiness of heart and life; it cannot lead to licentiousness to allow, that union to Christ is in order of nature before faith, tho' it be not distant in point of time.

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This notion will appear not to be without foundation, if we consider, that it is Christ's taking hold of us, that enables us to take hold of him. To this purpose said the great apostle ^e Paul, "I follow after, if I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Besides we are naturally dead in sin, and cannot perform the functions of life till we are quicken'd; therefore no spiritual act can come from us, without union first to Christ; for what is Christ's union with us, but the application of himself to us, to give us life. The exuberant branches of corrupt nature may be lop'd off, and the acts of sin may be suspended by the terrors of the law, and the fears of wrath; but till the Spirit has united the soul of a sinner to Christ, the strength of corruption remains in his heart, and he can put forth no acts of spiritual life. Was faith prior to union with Christ, there would be some quality in a sinner acceptable to God, which he never received from Christ: Was this so, there would be a communication of grace to a sinner, without a Saviour, and he would be acceptable to God out of Christ, which contradicts the whole tenor of Scripture. Christ indeed is ^f said to dwell in our hearts by faith, because as it is by his entrance into us, that he works faith in us, so when faith is wrought in us, he is received

^e Phil. iii. 14.^f Eph. iii. 17.

and embraced by our faith, and so dwells in us by faith, and we come under his quickening, transforming, and comforting impressions.

When faith receives Christ, the guilt of a believing sinner is transfer'd to Christ's account, and the fulness of his merit is applied to the sinner. Faith looks to Christ as dying for sin, and it receives him, and then the virtue of his blood is applied to the sinner. As under ^g the law, when a leper was cleansed, the blood of the sacrifice, when it had been shed for him, was sprinkled on him; so when a sinner is absolved from guilt, the blood of Christ is sprinkled upon him, as the effect of its having been shed for him, or it is really applied to him, when he receives Christ by faith: when this is done, there is a legal translation of his guilt to Christ's account, and a communication of Christ's merit to him. As during the ^h Mosaic dispensation, the offender was to lay his hand on the head of the sin-offering, to shew that his guilt was ceremonially charged upon the victim, so faith, like the hand put on the head of the sacrifice, lays the guilt of a sinner to the account of Christ, who expiated it when he died on the cross. The Jews observe, ⁱ that they who brought

^g Levit. xiv. 7.

^h iv. 28, 20.

סמיכה שרי מצוה על הראש בשתי ידים

Manuum impositio in reliquiis praecepti fiat in capite cum ambabus

brought a sin-offering, laid on both their hands, and did it with strength. When a sinner disburdens himself of guilt, by taking hold of Christ, he must do it with eagerness and vehemence, and he must lay the whole weight of his guilty soul upon him, and the merit of Christ's blood will be applied to him, for the finishing his guilt, and making propitiation for his iniquity.

The act of receiving Christ by faith, whereby our guilt is transfer'd to his account, and the virtue of his blood is applied to us, is put forth, when we, who are by nature plants of the wild olive, are first engrafted into him the good olive; but it is not a thing that must be done only once, but it must be done constantly, and must be repeated every day. We must receive Christ in every new duty in

ambabus manibus. Mishna. Ord. Kedoshim. Cod. Menachoth. cap. 9. §. 8. Vol. V. p. 96. Ed. Surenhusii.

Impositio reliquiarum praecepti fiat in capite] Expiatio quidem non est impedimento, sed imputatur ei perinde ac si non expiasset sacrificium [cum duabus manibus] Nam de hirco emissario scriptum est, "Et imponet Aharon ambas manus suas;" hinc colligimus fundamentum pro omnibus sacrificiis, quod scil. ambae manus adhiberi debeant. R. Obadias Bartenora in loc. ibid. p. 97.

Reliquiae praecepti] hae impositionem manuum desiderant, quia absque ea non facta expiatio. De hirco emissario scriptum est, "Et imponet Aharon ambas manus suas;" hinc doctores collegerunt omnis manuum impositionis fundamentum, quod nimirum ea ope manuum fieri debet. R. Moses ben Maimon. ibid.

The late learned M. Reland has observed the same from an ancient and scarce Jewish book, called Siphra. *Antiq. Heb. Par. III. c. .1 §. 16. p. 307, 308, 309.*

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which we engage, that we may in the duty we perform meet with acceptance with God. When the blood of Christ is sprinkled on the glorious throne of God, it is turned into a mercy seat, on which God sits to grant believers a gracious audience ; but with this they are not favour'd, unless there is a fresh application of the merits of Christ's blood ; this consecrates our duties, and renders them acceptable to God, but without this they are altogether distasteful to him ; therefore when we come to a new duty, we must receive Christ anew by faith. This we must do daily, for since not one day passes over our heads, without our contracting new guilt, we must every day be found in the renewed application of Christ, that it may be removed. We should not afford sleep to our eyes, nor commit ourselves to our nightly repose, till we have received and applied Christ, to cleanse our persons from all the sins of the day past ; so shall our sins be forgiven, and the good words of our mouths, and the pious breathing and meditations of our hearts be acceptable to that God, in whom we live, move, and have our being, and whose are all our ways.

C H A P. VI.

Of Reliance on Christ by Faith.

PResumption lifts up a man with a conceit of his own self-sufficiency and fulness, and makes him imagine himself to be able to stand on his own bottom: True faith, as it empties a sinner of all conceit of his own worth and fulness, so it relies on Christ for all those blessings, which conceited boasters are apt to think are due to them; and taking the soul off from trusting in itself, it brings it to rest on Jesus as the only Saviour. Christ is the foundation of all believers, and is the only groundwork of their standing and confidence: Faith is by nothing better expressed, than by resting and relying on a Redeemer; this may be scoffed at by men of flashy and corrupt fancies, and their talent for dull burlesque may stupidly shew itself in ridiculing it; under the indecent phrase of lolling on Christ; but this only may give us reason to fear, that these persons who thus venture to sit in the scorner's chair, never felt the burden of sin, and are entire strangers to that faith, of which they speak so irreverently. Faith relies on Christ, for a full and free pardon of sin, and for supports under

the burden of guilt; it rests on him for a perfect righteousness, to justify in the sight of God; it stays itself on him for strength, to perform duties, and to go on in the way of holiness; it trusts in him for a favourable admission into the presence of God; and it depends upon him for the actual bestowing eternal glory.

A sinner relies on Christ by faith, for the remission of all his sins; for as he died for sin, so the apostle Paul has assured us, it is in him ^a that "we have redemption thro' his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." Another inspired apostle ^b has declared, that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin; and when sinners come by faith to the blood of sprinkling, their sins are forgiven, or they have a grant made to them by God, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, whereby they are acquitted from the guilt of sin, and exempted from the punishment which belongs to it.

The meritorious cause of sins being done away, was the death of Christ; and the full satisfaction he thereby made to the justice of God. Guilt was carried away meritoriously by the death of Christ on the cross: Of him it ^c was prophesied, that he should bear away the iniquities of such as he came to save: He ^d

^a Eph. i. 7. ^b 1 John v. 7. ^c Isa. liii. 11. ^d John

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is the Lamb of God, that takes up, and bears away the sins of the world ; and he carried up to the cross the burden of our sins ;^e for “ he bore our sins, in his own body, on the tree.” When Christ suffered on the cross, he paid a ransom for us, because there was a translation of our guilt and punishment, in a law sense from us to him. When our sins were imputed to Christ, and he bore them on the cross, they were meritoriously taken away, being removed in the person of our surety and representative ; but they were not taken away, in our persons, for sin is not actually removed from us, till the blood of Christ is sprinkled upon us : When Christ purchased the pardon of our sins, he shed his blood for us, but his blood must be actually applied to us, before our sins can be actually forgiven ; and when it is applied, we pass from a state of guilt to a state of righteousness, which blessedness is the portion of no adult persons who do not believe.

There is a material difference between forgiveness absolutely and actually procured, and forgiveness actually applied : Forgiveness was actually procured for us, when Christ laid down his life on our account ; he ^f by himself purged away our sins, when he died for us ; and as he made a full expiation for them, he purchased the forgiveness of them not conditionally, or upon condition of faith and

^e 1 Pet. i. 24 :

^f Heb. i. 3.

repent-

repentance, but absolutely : However, tho' the purchase of our forgiveness was absolute and actual, yet there is no actual application of it to us, till we are united to Christ, and believe in him. We should therefore constantly observe the difference between forgiveness, as it is absolutely and actually purchased, and as it is actually applied; and then, as we shall not run into the mistake of such as make the actual application of forgiveness to be no more than a discovery to a man's conscience, that his sins are actually forgiven; so we shall stand clear of the error of them, who make the price of Christ's blood to be only a conditional grant of the forgiveness of sin; this is to make the death of Christ uncertain, as to its effects, and the validity and success of it to depend on our faith and repentance, which, by necessary consequence, is to deny him to be our sole and all-sufficient Saviour.

There may be said to be a virtual forgiveness of the sins of Christians, which are not yet committed, for the price is paid for them, and their persons are exempted from eternal condemnation. When they are first united to Christ, they have a relative absolution, and are as much out of the reach of condemnation, as when they are stepping in at the heavenly gate : Of this the apostle designed to certify us, when he said, " There is now no

* Rom. viii. 1.

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condemnation to such as are in Christ Jesus."

A Christian is at first judicially absolved, but forgiveness must be daily and particularly applied to him, upon the commission of daily and particular sins. Remission of sin is extended from our first engrafture into Christ, till our entrance into a state of glory, where there will be no more sin; and tho' the pardon is but one, it must be often pleaded by faith. A Christian is at once freed from eternal punishment, but upon the commission of every new transgression, and on every fresh fall, there must be a renewed application of the ransom of Christ's blood, for the taking his sin away, and for the washing out the scarlet stain of his guilt, and cleansing him from the crimson dye of his pollutions.

Faith relies on Christ for a full forgiveness of sin; and as it is certain, ^h that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin, there is no reason for convinced sinners to make exceptions, where God has made none. No sin is too great for Christ's blood to take away, nor shall the aggravations of any transgression prevent its being pardoned to such as rely upon him. There may have been direful examples of obstinate sinners being left to work out their own ruin; such an instance was that of Baalam, who knew his master's will, and would not do it; but was so in love with the wages

^h 1 John i. 7.

of unrighteousness, that he would pursue them, till he fell a ⁱsacrifice to the just anger of those who were appointed by God, to avenge their nation's wrongs, on those who had hired the impostor, to direct them how to ruin Israel: Such also was the case of Saul, the unhappy king of Israel, who would never act in conformity to the command of God, who exalted him to the throne; this provoked God entirely to forsake him, which drew from him that rueful ^kcomplaint, "God is departed from me." And it was but a little after this, that having seen his heroic son Jonathan killed, and his armies defeated, he endeavoured ^lto murder himself, but not being able to do it, was forced to beg a stranger to put an end to his disobedient and miserable life. Another instance we have in the traitor Achitophel; he ungratefully drew his sword against a brave and wise, as well as good prince, who had used him more like a bosom friend and a companion, than a subject, to join with his rebellious son; he gave the most crafty counsel against his injured Lord; but when it was prevented from being put in execution, by wise Hushai's superior cunning, he was so far left to himself, that retiring home in a fit of discontent, ^mhe hanged himself, and so put himself beyond the reach of mercy.

ⁱ Numb. xxxi. 8.^k 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.^l 1 Sam.

xxxi. 4. 2 Sam. i. 6—9.

^m 2 Sam. xvii. 23.

Such direful examples of sin's finding out the actors of it, in this life, are left upon record, that we may tremble and fear; and while we are obliged to say, Righteous art thou, O Lord, in all thy judgments, may see how unsafe the service of sin is. Yet when we rely on Christ by faith, for the remission of sins, we ought not to question the efficacy of his blood, but should be satisfied in our minds, that the mercy of God is extensive enough to grant, and the blood of Christ meritorious enough to purchase the full pardon of the greatest sins, when we trust in the Redeemer, and forsake our sins by a true repentance. Menasseh, king of Judah, was as profane and immoral a prince as ever lived; he was not content barely to worship idols, as others had done before him, but arrived to such a height of insolence, as to set up an image of Ashtoreth, the queen of heaven, in the temple of the great Jehovah, and to fill the courts of the God of hosts with altars to such powers as were pretended to preside over the stars; he murdered his children, by burning them alive, by way of sacrifice to Moloch; he dealt with inchanters, and entered into a contract with the devil; and he employed his authority to support vice, and to shed innocent blood almost without measure: When this grand rebel against heaven was of a king made a miserable captive, and in a prison had leisure to think on his ways,

and

and to humble himself greatly before the God of his fathers; ⁿ that God, whose name he had profaned, was entreated of him, and his sins were not too great to be forgiven. The apostle Paul was a sinner of another stamp, he, in false strictness, outdid the demurest Pharisee; yet he thought he could never do enough against the Christian name and interest; he beyond measure persecuted the church of God, drag'd the followers of Christ to prison, compelled such as were weak and wavering to blaspheme, and was so mad in his zeal against them, that he followed them to places where his powers did not bear him out in molesting them; yet this chief of such sinners who fulfil the lusts of the mind, had all his sins pardoned, and was made the happy instrument of spreading the knowledge of Jesus, whom he had ignorantly persecuted, over the greatest part of the then known world. Seeing therefore no sins are too great to be forgiven, to such as are convinced of the evil of them, as faith ought to look more to the merit of Christ, than to the greatness of the guilt of sin, so it ought to rely on Christ for a full pardon, which he certainly will apply to all such for whom he purchased it.

The pardon of sin, for which faith relies on Christ, is as free as it is full. When God

ⁿ 1 Chron. xxxiii.

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forgives our sins, he does it freely, as he has^o declared, by the prophet Isaiah, "I even I am he who blots out thy transgressions, for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins:" It is not because of our merit that God forgives sin, but he does it freely: As to Christ indeed forgiveness was the reward of his merit, and it was purchased for us by him; but with regard to us it is a gift, without any preparatory qualifications in us: his blood is a^p fountain open, and should not be fenced in with a wall of antecedent conditions and preparatory qualifications; for these preparations must be from our strength, or from the Spirit's working; from our strength they cannot be, for in our fallen state we are impotent to all good; if they are wrought by the Spirit, they are blessings for which we are indebted, and are the consequences of free pardon, and not preparations for it.

Faith relies on Christ, as one who can support the soul under the burden and weight of sin, and can deliver from all the spiritual evils deserved by it. When a sinner is pinch'd with the gripes of a wounded conscience, is made thoroughly sensible of his inability to fulfil the law, and answer the demands of justice, and is brought to see himself exposed to the displeasure of a powerful judge, and in danger of eternal destruction,

^o Isa. xliii. 25.

^p Zech. xiii. 1.

his first enquiry is, how he shall be delivered from sin, and the evils it deserves: His language is to this effect; How shall I get rid of my guilt? How shall I escape that eternity of punishment, which I have deserved? How shall I get my soul covered from the storm of enraged justice? Is there no balm in Gilead, to heal my festering wounds? Is there no physician to be found, who will try his skill and his power on the inveteracy and malignity of my disease? Is there no hope or help left for me? I have destroyed myself, but is there none to save me? When a sinner is brought to complain in this rueful manner, if Christ is set before him, as a Saviour every way suited to him, he relies on him as his only deliverer; and whenever he is proposed to him, as one that can carry away his guilt, pay his debts, and bear his punishment, and as one who can satisfy justice, pacify God's anger, and ward off the blow of infinite wrath, he casts himself upon Christ, and relies upon him, as the only person that can deliver him from the curse of a violated law, and from the direful vengeance of an angry God, and that can give him ease in the midst of the tortures and agonies of a troubled conscience. Faith brings a trembling humbled sinner to the cross of Christ, there to view the Redeemer agonizing under the wrath of God, groaning, bleeding, sighing, dying for sin; on this sight, he brings his soul, which

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is weary, despairing, faint and forlorn, to look to a dying Jesus; and relies on him for support, under the weight and burden of guilt, and for deliverance from all eternal evils deserved by sin.

When a sinner is once convinced of his inability to satisfy the justice of God, which he has offended and provoked, and has the righteousness of Christ revealed to his faith, he by faith relies on Christ, for a full and perfect justification before God. When a man is left to himself, and is without a sight of Christ by faith, he often stupidly thinks all will be well with him, tho' he continues to provoke God, by abounding in all manner of lusts and disorderly actions. Many are like that insensible sinner described by ⁹ Moses, who tho' he heard all the dreadful curses of the law thunder'd out, yet could be so void of remorse, as to bless himself in his heart, and say, "I shall have peace, tho' I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to my thirst:" They bolster themselves up with this false fancy, that God is a merciful God, and will not spend his fury on the works of his own hands, merely for faults in which they pretend they mean no harm, or for sins which they say they cannot help; but at the same time they forget that God is a God of truth, who will not let his threat-

⁹ Deut. xxix. 19.

ning fall to the ground, for the sake of those who dishonour him by a course of disobedience; and that he is a righteous God, who will not stain his justice to save those, who every moment render themselves unworthy of his mercy; and unless they get a better plea, than their being God's creatures, and his being a merciful God, they will to their everlasting confusion find, that he that made them will have no mercy on them, and he who formed them will shew them no favour.

Other sinners may not be so stupid, but may have avoided gross sins, may be civil in their behaviour, and just in their dealings, and may be much set off and beautified with the glare of some useful virtues, and with the fair vernish of morality; these may be useful to others, and may do much good in the world, and yet may turn what is in itself commendable to their own hurt; for as they know not the full extent of the law, they are apt to think, they have fulfilled all that is necessary to bring them to heaven, they may speak with as much confidence concerning their attainments, as the conceited youth, of whom the evangelists give us an account, who with an air of vanity and arrogance said thus to the Saviour of the world, when he had given him a summary of the moral law, "All these have I kept from my youth up,

† Matth. xix. 20.

what

what lack I yet?" tho' they as well as he may be wanting in many things. It is only mens ignorance of themselves, of the law, and of the essential righteousness of God, that puts them upon trusting in any thing they can do for their justification before God, and hinders them from submitting to the righteousness of Christ. All the works and duties a man can perform, can never atone for the omissions that must attend the obedience of imperfect creatures; and when they are not performed from a right principle of love to God, and for the pure end of glorifying him, tho' they may be good in themselves, they are not pleasing to him; yet they are what a man trusts in, as long as he is without faith in Christ, and he is often so far from being humbled with a sense of the sins that cleave to his best performances, that he has the arrogance to say ^f to the searcher of hearts, "God I thank thee, I am not as other men are."

When a sinner is sensible of his own demerits, and is convinced that he can never, in his own person, answer the demands of justice, he stands trembling and shaking before God, as a condemned malefactor, and cries out, I have done foolishly, and deserve to die; but when he comes to have a sight of the righteousness of Christ, in the fulness and perfection of it, and is told that this righte-

^f Luke xviii. 11.

ousness shall be his, if he stays upon it for justification, he casts himself on it, and it is in Christ alone he expects righteousness: Agreeably to what Christ declared concerning such as trust in him, when he was brought in speaking ^t thus, by the prophet, "Surely shall one say of me, in Jehovah have I righteousness and strength, in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified." What a convinced sinner is most afraid of is the guilt of sin, and a righteousness that may justify him before God is what he chiefly looks after; when the burden of guilt lies heavy upon him, he speaks to this purpose with himself, I am guilty, and how shall I be made righteous? I am under a sentence of condemnation, how shall I avoid it? A curse is denounced against me, how shall I get it turned into a blessing? Can I think this can be brought about by my duties? Alas, no! I have rather reason to cry out, what can atone for the sins that mix with all my performances? When a burden'd sinner is thus querying with himself, no sooner does the Spirit shew him the righteousness of Christ, and create faith in him, but he lays hold on Christ's righteousness, and relies on it, as that in which he can stand before the Judge of all the earth without shame and blushing, and by which he can be justified in the court of heaven.

^t Isa. xlv. 24, 25.

Part III. OF SAVING FAITH. 261

Faith resigns up the soul to the mercies of God, and the infinite merits of Christ, and has no confidence in the flesh; it brings the sinner to look on all things as nothing, and not fit to be joined to Christ, who is the only foundation for his reliance; and then his care is how to be found in the righteousness of Christ. Thus it was with one of the greatest converts that ever appear'd in the world, the apostle Paul, who thus ^u declared concerning himself; "What things were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ, yea doubtless I count all things but loss, for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is thro' the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God thro' faith." The drift of what he has said is to this purpose; If any man could trust in his own performances, I certainly could, for I was a genuine Israelite, and by sect a strict Pharisee; I had a sincere zeal for my religion, and was most blameless in my conversation; but tho' these things formerly fed my pride, in the times of my ignorance, yet I now cast off all confidence in them, and desire to look for my gain only in and from Christ; for him

^u Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9.

I have suffered the loss of all things, and reckon them as worthless, in comparison of the excellent riches which I meet with in him; yet I do not value myself even on this account, my only desire is, that I may be found in him, not covered with the rags of my own legal services, and imperfect duties, but cloathed with the righteousness of a Mediator, which I know will render me righteous in the sight of God, because as it is without spot and blemish, it is approved by him, and he finds the fullest satisfaction in it. The apostle did not distinguish between his works done before conversion, and those done after, but he as absolutely renounced all confidence in the works which he did after he was a Christian, as he rejected all trust in the deeds he performed, whilst he was a persecuting Pharisee; he durst not venture to be found in any personal righteousness of his own, but he staid himself on the righteousness of another; this was the righteousness of Christ, which is so called, because he wrought it out; it is also stiled a righteousness thro' faith, because faith receives it, and relies upon it; and it is likewise termed the righteousness of God, because God accepts it, as a just judge, for the full justification of a sinner, when he pleads it before him, and relies upon it as his title to his favour.

Faith relies on Christ only, and not on any other, when it stays the soul upon him for
justi-

justification before God; therefore when we seek to be justified, we ought never to trust in any thing but his righteousness; for if we put any thing in its place, or join any thing with it, we shall forfeit all right and title to the favour of our judge. To this purpose the apostle Paul declared to the ^w Galatians, "I Paul say to you, if you are circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing;" that is, if you have any opinion that you shall be justified by circumcision, or any thing prescribed by the law, or if you join your works and duties with Christ, as necessary to your justification, I must, with the authority of an apostle, declare to you, that you are guilty of denying and disclaiming Christ, and you have gained no more profit by him, than they who never heard of him. If we build on any thing but Christ's righteousness, we have only a tottering foundation under us. The foundation of our own works may appear solid to us in a false light, and we for a time may think ourselves firmly built upon it; but a day is coming that will shake this false foundation, and if we are not got off from it, we shall be buried under its ruins: This will be in the tumultuating conflicts which may be in our consciences in this life, or in the great day of accounts, when the tempest of God's fierce indignation shall blow from heaven

^w Gal. v. 2.

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against all unrighteousness of men; then the false foundation of works and duties, or the house built on the sand will fall, and great will the fall of it be. We should always remember, that no creature was joined with the great captain of our salvation, when he engaged in the bloody conflict, but he stood alone, when he died to expiate our guilt; therefore no duties or works of obedience, no saints or angels must be joined with him, but he must stand alone, when he justifies our persons before God; for as he alone wrought out that righteousness by which we are justified, it is most highly reasonable that he alone should wear the glory.

If the righteousness of Christ is that only, on which faith relies for justification, then it is an odd and unsafe way of talking to say, Faith itself is the condition of our justification. The word condition is very ambiguous; it is used in Latin writers in several senses, sometimes * it signifies what is imposed upon persons

* *Erat iniqua conditio postulare, ut Caesar Arimino excederet.* Caesar Bell. Civ. lib. I. c. 11. §. 1.

Convenire, ut quam conditionem supplicii majores in bello timiditati militis propositam esse voluerunt, eandem tu in pace constituas improbitati senatoris. Cicero pro Cluentio, c. 46. Vol. III. p. 209. Ed. Graev.

Conditio Caesari lata est, ut easdem res alio modo ferret. Id. de Prov. Conf. c. 19. Vol. V. p. 514.

Ut conditiones ferret leges imponeret. Id. Philip. VII. c. 1. Vol. VI. p. 743.

Victis conditiones accipiendas esse non ferendas respondit. Livius, lib. IV. c. 10.

Condi-

persons against their will, sometimes it denotes a treaty of agreement either offered or

Conditiones impositas Patribus, nequis quoad bellatum effect tributum daret. Id. lib. VI. c. 30.

⁊ Magnopere se confidere demonstrat, si ejus rei sit potestas facta, fore ut aequis conditionibus ab armis discedatur. Caes. Bell. Civil. lib. I. c. 26. §. 4.

Dicit posse conditionibus bellum poni. Sallust. Jugurth. c. 65. p. 397. Ed. Wasse.

Placet mihi ista defensio, aequa enim conditio, aequum certamen proponitur. Cicero in Verrem, lib. II. c. 12. Vol. I. p. 695.

Fuci reculant, Apibus conditio placet.

Phaedrus, lib. III. Tab. 13. v. 12.

Discordiae civium antea conditionibus sanari solitae, ferro adjudicatae. Velleius Paterc. lib. II. c. 3. p. 142. Ed. Burman.

Fulvii Flacci filius, quem pater legatum de conditionibus miserat, interreptus est. Id. ibid. c. 7. p. 158.

Tentavit — aequis conditionibus bellum componere. Id. ibid. c. 25. p. 226.

Saluberrimas coalescentis conditiones pacis — rupit. Id. ibid. c. 48. p. 337.

Finitimos omnes aut bello domuit, aut conditionibus sui juris fecit. Id. ib. c. 108. p. 522.

Ad novas pacis conditiones ferendas, decem legatos misit. Curtius lib. IV. c. 11. p. 249. Ed. Snakenburg.

Conditiones pacis quae fertis, si accepero, victorem eum facient. Id. ibid. p. 254.

Nullam se conditionem pacis accipere respondit. Id. lib. VII. c. 11. p. 562.

Legatos de conditione deditionis misit ad regem. Id. lib. IX. c. 8. p. 725.

Audire conditiones — parabat. Tacit. Hist. lib. I. c. 41. p. 161. Ed. Gronov.

Motis apud Ilerdam deditionis conditionibus. Sueton. J. Caes. c. 75. p. 85. Ed. Graev. p. 125. Ed. Pitisc.

Antonium feras conditiones pacis tentantem ad mortem adigit. Id. Aug. c. 17. p. 135. al. 189.

Quasi ad conditionem pacis militibus deductis. Idem Othon. c. 9. p. 596. al. 896.

accepted,

accepted, but at ² other times it signifies an article in a treaty, on the performance of which the agreement stands, and he who fulfils it is entitled to a reward, but by the non-performance of that condition the covenant is entirely broke, and the breaker of it is liable to a penalty. In this latter sense the word has been long used by lawyers, and in this sense faith can never be said to be the condition of justification; for as a judicious divine ^a has well observed, was the

² *Accepit deditionem dein questum occipit.*

Terent. And. Act. I. Sc. i. v. 52.

Conditio est pactio certam legem in se continens. Donat. in loc.

Egit cum Cimone, ut eam sibi uxorem daret; id si impetrasset se pecuniam soluturum, is eum talem conditionem aspernaretur. Cornel. Nep. in Cimon. c. 1. p. 88. Ed. Amst.

Haec quo facilius, certisque conditionibus fiant. Caesar. Bel. Civ. lib. I. c. 9. §. 6.

Ac si coram de omnibus conditionibus disceptetur. Id. ibid. c. 25. §. 6.

Metuenti ne si pax fieret, ipse per condiciones ad supplicium traderetur. Sallust. Jugurth. c. 65. p. 397.

Quo in loco conditionem tuli, si vellet pecuniam petere, per Quintium judicatum solvi satisfidaturum, dum ipse si quid peteret pari conditione uteretur. Cicero pro Quintio, c. 28. Vol. I. p. 101.

— *Matrem fecit haeredem senex,
Sub conditione totam ut fortunam tribus
Aequaliter distribuatur.*

Phaedrus lib. IV. Fab. 4. v. 8.

Plerique capti cessam sibi sub conditione vitam, si militare adversus eum vellent, recusarunt. Sueton. Caes. c. 68. p. 81. al. 117.

Conditione proposita, ut si quem quis repetere vellet, par periculum poenae subiret. Id. Aug. c. 32. p. 167. al. 231.

^a See Mr. R. Taylor's Script. Doct. of Justification, p. 152—156.

matter

matter so, justification would be the reward of faith, which it is not; we must be supposed to have power of our own to perform it, which we are without; there would be that in our justification whereof we might glory, which is contrary to God's design; and the covenant of grace would be turned into a covenant of works, and that a worse covenant than was made with Adam, seeing he had strength to perform the condition of perfect obedience, required of him, whereas we have no power to believe of ourselves.

No sinner can ever be actually justified without faith, but yet he is not justified for it, neither is it the condition of justification, because a condition may be pleaded as a valuable consideration in law; but no sinner can plead his faith as valuable before God's bar, in the point of justification; he may plead the truth and goodness of God, to make good what he has promised to his faith, but he can never plead the valuableness of his faith; consequently it is not a condition, seeing nothing can be called so, which is not valuable, in a legal acceptation. Supposing a rich prince should promise to relieve a company of indigent persons, if they will receive his charity, would it not be the highest impudence in such indigents to say, their receiving the alms is the condition of the prince's bounty, and entitles them to his liberality? Much more arrogant would it be in a sinner,

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to pretend that his faith is the condition for which God justifies him; God will not justify him, unless he receives from his hand the grace of justification; but his receiving this from God is not the condition of it, because he cannot plead this act of receiving the grace of justification, which is freely given, and the power to receive which is wrought in him, as a valuable consideration in a law sense. When God justifies a sinner, he acts as a righteous judge, and according to strict impartial justice; there is no acceptilation, no abatement, no composition, or taking a small part for the whole, in a sinner's justification, but the rigour of justice is exerted, because God exacts a full payment of the sinner's debt from Christ; and on this he discharges the sinner, and accepts him as righteous for his son's sake.

When it is said, if a man believes he shall be justified, the meaning is not, he shall be justified because he believes, but he that believes shall be justified. A criminal convict is not acquitted, in human judicatures, if he does not plead his prince's pardon in court; but none will be so silly as to say, his bare pleading his pardon is the condition of his pardon; indeed the judge must proceed upon his conviction to pass sentence on him, if he stands mute, and will not plead his prince's pardon; but his act of pleading his pardon cannot be said, with any tolerable propriety,

to be the condition of his being cleared. A sinner is not pardoned, if he does not believe in Christ, and receive his righteousness; but his believing and receiving Christ's righteousness is far from being the condition of his pardon.

It is pleaded by many, that the act of believing justifies a sinner before God; but this opinion, as it has not Scripture on its side, so it is big with absurdities: Should we suppose this to be the case, a sinner would be taken off from eying the righteousness of Christ alone for justification, and would look to his own faith, and make that the matter of his confidence. It is hard to conceive, how a sinner could be kept from setting his faith above Christ's righteousness, or placing it in its room, if the act of faith was to justify him; he would repose his confidence on his faith, and would stay his soul upon it. Nothing is more prejudicial to a sinner, than for him to be taken off from Christ, and encouraged to cast his eye on any thing in himself; so far as he looks to Christ he stands sure, but so far as he trusts to himself, he is placed on ground that will fail under him. A Christian ought to say of his faith, as holy Job^b said of his prayer, "Tho' I was righteous, I would not answer God, but I would make supplication to my judge; if I had call'd,

^b Job ix. 15, 16.

and

and he had answer'd, yet would I not believe he had hearken'd to my voice." These words do not appear to spring, as some think, from a pang of unbelief, for no question but Job, who was launched into a sea of sorrow, observed all the gracious answers God gave to his prayers; he rather spoke of the self-denying opinion he had of his prayers, when they were really answered; as if he had said, I am so far from standing upon terms with God, that when I, in the most sincere humble manner, and with the greatest ardor, call upon his name, and make my prayer to him, and when I find he is so kind as to answer my requests, I will not harbour a fancy, that he hearkens to my voice, for any worthiness in me; neither will I believe that the return I receive from heaven is for any value in my prayers; I will conclude he has listen'd to the sounding of his bowels, to the cries of mercy, and to the prevailing voice of a Mediator interceding for me. As this humble saint did by his prayers, every Christian must do by the act of faith, when he stands before God as a justifier: He cannot be justified without faith, and yet he must not look to it as what justifies him, but must keep his eye on the righteousness of Christ only; and when he most strongly acts faith on Christ, he must be far from relying on his faith; he must say, I have believed in Christ, and God has justified me, but I will not believe God has absolved me for my

my faith; I know I must trust in Christ, if I am accepted of my judge, but I will banish for ever all thoughts of my being pleasing to God, for the sake of my act of believing. Whoever steers this course, provides for his present comfort and future safety.

Was it allowed, that the act of believing justified a sinner, glorying in the flesh would be as much of faith as it is of works; a sinner might have something whereof to boast, and might proudly say, God I thank thee, that I have faith to justify me before thee. The apostle Paul^c assured us, that all boasting is excluded by the law of faith, when he said, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded: By what law? By the law of works? No, but by the law of faith." By the law of faith, the inspired writer meant the doctrine of faith, or the account of God's method of saving sinners, after such a way, as stains all the pride of the fallen degenerate creature's glory. According to the Scripture doctrine of redemption, a sinner is justified only by what is in Christ, and not for faith or any thing in himself; this way of proceeding excludes all ground of boasting: According^d to the apostle Paul, those notions of justification are false and impious, which do not strip man of all glorying in himself: If faith justified, as a work, all occasion of boasting could never be taken from justified persons.

^c Rom. iii. 27.

^d Vid. Pareum in loc.

If we should once grant a sinner to be justified by the act of believing, a justified person would be shook with earthquakes of fears, and tore with endless convulsions, whenever he was to perceive his faith to be weak. If at any time he was to find the struglings of unbelief, he might conclude his justification to be dissolved; for justification cannot be fixed and permanent, unless what procures it is constantly of the same value. The righteousness of Christ is a firm unmoveable foundation for a Christian's faith, and he may with the greatest boldness offer it to God, as his righteousness, and say, Lord here is a perfect righteousness, which thou mayest with honour to thy justice accept; and upon thy acceptance of it, I expect justification from thee: When he is full of doubts and fears, he may rest on the righteousness of Christ, as a firm ground for his tottering faith; and with the fullest persuasion of mind, may present the merit of Christ before the bar of God, as what can finish transgression, make an end of sin, and offer up a propitiation for iniquity; as what can procure him acceptance with God, satisfy the justice of the mighty Potentate whom he has provoked, and appease the anger of his offended judge; as what can magnify the law, and make it honourable; and as what can procure him a right and title to the heavenly glory: As the righteousness of Christ, who by the strength
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of his divine nature offered himself without spot to God, can bring all this about for sinners, they must be foes to their comfort and interest, who will trust in their faith, as the ground of their acceptance with God, rather than rely on Christ, in whom alone all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and in whom they may with safety glory.

Every man, as he comes into the world, is dead in trespasses and sins, and so cannot put forth the acts of a divine life, or perform duties in such a way as that they may be acceptable to God, because he is void of a principle of love to him, and is not influenced by a desire to advance his glory. A Christian who is renewed by the power of divine grace, is in this life only sanctified in part, and has sin cleaving to all his religious performances, and so can do nothing without sin; he is continually hurried with temptations, which spring up in his own heart thro' lust; and harass'd with the suggestions of the princes of darkness, who are subtle and powerful enemies, and are continually watching for his halting, and striving to bring about his ruin; so that if he was left to himself he would soon faint, tire, and droop: It is necessary then, that all whom Christ has made alive, should by faith rely on him for strength, to perform duties, to hold on their way in his paths, and to encounter all those enemies, which endeavour

deavour to bring them off from seeking the eternal well-being of their souls.

It is an obligation which lies upon all who profess to believe in Christ, to shew their faith to be real and sincere, by the holiness of their lives, and to manifest, that they depend on the merit of his sacrifice, by their submitting to him as their King: That they may do this, it is necessary they should rely on him by faith, for strength: He himself, speaking ^e by the prophet, declared, that all who are to be saved by him, should rely on him for strength as well as righteousness; "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Except we rely on Christ we can do nothing; this he told his disciples, in these ^f words; "As the branch cannot bear fruit, except it abide in the vine, no more can you, except you abide in me; without me you can do nothing." Unless we are united to Christ, and have faith in him, we can do nothing which is spiritually good; but if we have him to afford us strength, we can do all things: As the apostle Paul said ^g of himself, "I can do all things, thro' Christ that strengthens me." By faith we draw power from Christ, to make us holy; hence he is called ^h our sanctification: He makes us holy, by sending his Spirit, to dwell in us, to change our na-

^e Isa. xlv. 24.

^f John xv. 4, 5.

^g Phil. iv. 13.

^h 1 Cor. i. 30.

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ture, and to stamp his own likeness upon us. When we do not believe in Christ, we may have morality, but without believing we can have no true holiness; for it is by faith in Christ, that we are strengthened for the right performance of duties. If we do not act faith on Christ, when we engage in duties, our strength is weakened in our way, and they are no other than weariness to our flesh; but when we rely on Christ for strength, we are enabled to go thro' the duties we engage in with vigour and cheerfulness; and we are so far from thinking his yoke tiresome, that it sits easy upon our necks; our obedience is not forced, like that of slaves to a hard task-master, but it is chearful and ready, like what grateful persons yield to such as are over them, from whom they have received the highest obligations. If we rely not on Christ, lumpishness and dulness will discover themselves in our religious actions; and we shall go on in the way of obedience, with a feeble pace, and with slow steps; but if we have his everlasting arms to be underneath us, and walk in the strength of him, the Lord God of our salvation, we shall find things most difficult to bare flesh and blood made easy, and shall reckon what is most against the bent of corrupt nature pleasant. Indeed faith, as it teaches us to do our duty in the strength of Christ, so it makes us weak in ourselves, that we may be strong in him. Hence the

apostle Paul ⁱ said, "When I am weak, then am I strong." When a Christian is weak in his own apprehension, and is ready to acknowledge he has no strength of his own, he wholly depends on Christ, and relying on him, feels power coming from him, to strengthen him to do what of himself he has no power to do. As Christ fills only the hungry with good things, so he strengthens only such as are weak in their own apprehensions; and they who think they have any power of their own, will find none from him: If we would then put forth life in every duty, we must come to it, depending on Christ for strength and sufficiency; we must begin all in his name, and must proceed in his help, and then we shall end for his praise.

If we would answer the character we bear of the followers of Christ, we must not be content with any low measure of sanctity, but when we have done any thing pleasing to God, we ought to be ashamed that we can do so little, and should desire to do more. When we are brought to walk in Christ's paths, it is not designed that we should sleep and loiter by the way, but we ought, with a vigorous speed, to pass forwards towards the heavenly gate. We are commanded to ^k grow in grace, and we ought not to be contented with excelling, if that be our case, thro' the

ⁱ 2 Cor. xii. 10.

^k 2 Pet. iii. 18.

good hand of our God upon us, in any one particular grace, but should abound in all the graces of the Spirit's working, and add the exercise of one grace to that of another, according to the following advice of the apostle Peter,¹ to the Christians to whom he wrote, " Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience piety, and to piety brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love." If we have been enabled to acquit ourselves in a way becoming the character of Christians, we must not imagine we have done all that is necessary, but we must regard what we have done as nothing, in comparison of what lies before us to be done. The great apostle of the Gentiles was the tallest cedar that ever grew in the garden of grace, and yet he took his eyes off from what he had performed, and looked only to what remained to do, as appears from his following declaration made to the Christians at ^m Philippi, " I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, ⁿ forgetting

¹ 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7.^m Phil. iii. 13, 14.

ⁿ Τα ὀπίσω ἐπιλανθάνομενος, in these words there is a great elegance; Oppian uses the same phrase to picture to us dogs following their chase with full speed.

Εξοπίσω δ' ἐπὶ νεώτερον ἀθροίσεν

Ιχθυῶν. ἐπὶ γόμῃσι θόρον αὐτίκα καὶ χαλῶντες,

ἀηδόμηναι τῷ πρόσθεν.

Cynaget. iv. 360.

these things which are behind, and reaching
 ° forth to the things which are before, I press
 towards the mark, for the price of the high
 calling of God in Christ Jesus." This great
 proficient in the Christian race would not so
 much as cast an eye on what was behind, or
 what he had done; but he pursued what lay
 before him with the utmost vigour, like one
 running with eager speed, and on full stretch.
 Tho' we may be much inferior to the apostle

• Τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενοι; in which word the apostle
 elegantly expresses the strain, which the racers among the
 Greeks put upon themselves, when they eagerly stretched
 themselves in running for a prize; Their strained motion is
 admirably described by Oppian, in the following beautiful
 lines.

Ὡς ἡ ποδακείης μεμνημένοι ἄνδρες ἀέθλων,
 Στάβῳ ὀρμηθέντες, ἀπόσπυται ὤκεια γῆν
 Προπορταίνοντες, δολιχὸν τέλ' ἐχόμενοι
 Εἰσάγει πᾶσιν ἡ πόρος νύσσῃ τε πελάσσει,
 Νίκης τε γλυκύδαρον εἰεῖν κράτος, ἔς τε Δύρβρα
 Αἰεταί, καὶ κράτος αἰετῶν ἀμφιβαλίσθαι.

Halicutic. iv. 101.

The word προπορταίνοντες admirably expresses the quick mo-
 tion, and the eagerness the racers used; and the word used
 by the apostle in a very lively manner sets forth their strain-
 ing. Ovid in a like case uses the word incumbō:

— — Nunc nunc incumbere tempus,
 Hippomene propera, nunc viribus utere totis.

Metam. X. 658.

— — Locum capiunt signoque repente
 Corripiunt spatia audito, limenque relinquunt
 Effusi nimbo fimiles: simul ultima signant.

Virgil, Aen. v. 315, &c.

Statius has well described the eagerness of racers, waiting
 for the signal to start.

Poplite nunc flexo fidunt, nunc lubrica forti
 Pectora collidunt plausu: nunc ignea tollunt
 Crura, brevemque fugam nec opino sine reponunt.

Thebaid. vi. 590, &c.

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in grace, yet we ought to imitate, in some measure, his vigorous motion ; we should not sit down lazily to ponder on the little way we have run, but should with alacrity press forwards, and never rest satisfied, till we have run the whole race set before us.

It is impossible that we can mend our pace, or double our speed, by our own strength ; for what the wisest monarch^p that ever grac'd a throne observed, holds true, in an especial manner, of the spiritual race, " The race is not to the swift." Neither can we obtain the prize without heavenly assistance ; according to the apostle Paul's^a declaration, that " It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shews mercy." If we attempt to run the Christian race in our own strength, we shall soon slide and fall ; but if we rely on Christ, we shall so run, that we shall obtain the prize ; according to what the^r evangelical prophet has declared in the following beautiful passage, " The everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, gives power to the faint, and encreases strength to such as have no might ; even the youths shall faint, and be weary, and the vigorous young men shall utterly fail, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and

^a Eccles. ix. 11.^a Rom. ix. 16.^r Isaiah xl. 28—31.

these things which are behind, and reaching
 ° forth to the things which are before, I press
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^p Eccles. ix. 11.

^a Rom. ix. 16.

^r Isaiah xl. 28—31.

not faint." If we trust to ourselves, we shall be so far from making any progress, that we shall soon droop; tho' we may imagine ourselves to be as vigorous as such as are in their full strength, and the flower of their years, we shall find that we mistake ourselves, and that we shall quickly faint, and tire, and die; but if we wait on Christ for spiritual strength, in a way of believing reliance, our vigour will be renewed, our wings will not flag and hang down, but with a sprightly motion we shall spring up towards heaven like eagles, and we shall be enabled to run in the way of God's commandments without being weary, and to walk in the paths of his precepts without being faint, till we come to that blessed place, where weakness will be lost in perfect strength, and where fainting and weariness will never clog the wheels of our souls any more. We can never grow in grace, or increase in holiness, unless we depend on the great Captain of our salvation for strength; and if we rely on him, we shall never be ashamed or confounded; for he is the everlasting God, the Creator of all things, who faints not, neither is weary, being invested with almighty power; he can therefore give power to the faint, and strength to such as have no might; he can enable the feeble and weak to climb over every mountain of opposition, and can make every thing which is crooked to become to them strait, and every

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rough

rough place plain: Leaning on him who ought to be the beloved of our souls, we may safely pass thro' the waste and howling wilderness of this world, and reach the borders of the land of heavenly rest; and trusting to the wisdom of our pilot, we may sail thro' life's tempestuous sea, and at last make our desired haven.

All that have trod the path of life before us, and have been our predecessors in running the Christian race, have held on their way, and finished their course by faith in Christ. All that glorious assembly of the first-born, who are now enjoying perfect ease, and delightful rest, were assisted to encounter their toils by the same mighty Redeemer, who is held forth to our faith; by his strength they run, and from him they received the prize: "Wherefore (to use * the apostle's words) being compassed about with so great a cloud

* Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3.

† *Εχοντες πολλοὺς μαρτύρων ἡμῶν νέφος μαρτύρων*: This signifies a great number of witnesses, in which sense it is used by the best Greek writers.

— *Αλλὰ ὃ νέφος ἔπειτο πέζων.*

Homer. Iliad. IV. 274.

Νέφος τοσέτων ἀνθρώπων ἀνωσάμενοι. Herodot. lib. viii. c. 109.

— *Τοιόν Ελ-*

λάνων νέφος ἀμφὶ σε κρύπτει.

Euripides Hecuba, v. 905. Ed. King. v. 907. Ed. Barnes.

— *Εμαυτὸν ἢ πόλιν*

Στίνα· δακρύσας, ἣν περίεῃ ἔχει νέφος

Τοῦτον.

Idem Phoeniss. v. 1332. al. 1320.

cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which easily besets us; and let us run with patience the race^u which is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, lest we be wearied, and faint in our minds." We should always be diffident of our own strength, and acknowledge it is no better than weakness; we never should indulge any beloved lust, which is inconsistent with believing; and when we run the race which is set before us, we should rely on that great Saviour, who was made perfect thro' sufferings; and we ought to re-

Ὅσων δυσμενέων ἀνδρῶν νέφος ἀμφιδέδμεν
Εἰνεῖα σεῦ.

Apollonius Rhod. Argonaut. IV. 398.

The Latin writers have used the same metaphor to denote a multitude.

Insequitur nimbus peditum, clipeataque totis
Agmina densantur campis.

Virgil. Aeneid. VII. 793.

— Nubes subito cum densa Laconum
Saxosis latebris intenta ad proelia circum
Funditur,

Silius Italicus vi. 336.

Rex peditum equitumque nubes jactat. Livius lib. xxxv.
c. 49. Vol. III. p. 319. Edit. Gronov.

^u Τὸν προκείμενον ἀγῶνα: This phrase is used by the best Greek writers.

Τυχῆς ἀγῶνα τὸν προκείμενον ὡρῶ
Δάσων.

Euripides Oreste, v. 845.

Ὡς εἰς ἀγῶνα τὸν προκείμενον δαδὸς
Ὀρμῶμεν.

Idem Phoeniss. v. 797. al. 787.

Ὡ μὲν ἔτι περὶ τοῦ τρόπου τὸν ἀγῶνα μοὶ προκίσθαι.

The Latins used the same phrase.

Magnum erat certamen propositum. Cicero pro Flacco,
cap. 37. p. 193. Vol. IV. Ed. Graev.

gard

gard him not barely as the author or beginner, but as the finisher of our faith. If we trust in him, he will encrease our faith, and will add to our vigour; and he will never suffer us to fall, so as to rise no more, but will help us forward in our race, till we come with joy to finish our course; and we shall have from him that crown of righteousness, which is laid up for us, and all others that wait on him, and love his appearance. If Christ has begun a good work in us, if we depend on him, we need not fear but he will finish it, when we come to stand in our lot among the righteous, and to appear in the presence of our glorified head.

They who engage in Christ's service have many enemies to hinder them in their course, and to let them in their way towards heaven; and their case is the worse, because they carry a dangerous enemy within them, which is sin: As they are only sanctified in part, they cannot expect to be without emotions which must be disagreeable to their renewed part; so that they are sometimes hinder'd from doing the good they would, and are by the many temptations which rise in their hearts thro' lust, hurried on to the commission of offences, which upon cool thought they cannot but abhor: Therefore they have great need to rely on Christ for strength, to struggle with their unruly corruptions. There is a combat carried on in the souls of the best persons

persons here below, between sin and grace ; for the apostle Paul has assured ^w us, that “ The flesh earnestly struggles against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.” The unrenewed part will be always resisting the motions of the Spirit, who is the renewer of the soul ; this occasions great uneasinesses to the best Christians, and makes their life a time of warfare ; and this occasions them to groan, being burden’d ; and this burden they cannot entirely be freed from, till they put off the body of sin and death ; then, and not before, they shall be freed from all inclinations to what wounds their peace, and destroys their quiet. We cannot expect to see a draught of the contrary workings of sin and grace, in a renewed soul, touched by a better hand than that of the great apostle Paul ; he has given us a lively representation of what is to be met with in all sanctified persons, in the following ^s words, “ What I do I allow not, for what I would that I do not, but what I hate that do I ; if then I do what I would not, I consent to the law that it is good ; so that it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me ; for I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing ; to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I find not ; for the good that I would that I do not, but the evil I would not that I

^s Gal. v. 17. ^s Rom. vii. 15—25.

do ;

do ; now if I do what I would not, it is not I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me ; I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members ; O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the law of sin and death ! I thank God thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." The very taking a view of this account of one who had mortified the body of sin and death, as much as any one who ever trod the stage of life, may make us sensible, how unsafe it is for us to engage with the lusts that rise up in our hearts by our own strength ; whilst we are in the body sin will disturb us, and as the remains of original corruption will remain with us, as long as we are on this side the grave, we shall find this corrupt root of bitterness will sprout forth, and produce many evil fruits ; these will greatly embitter our passage thro' this tiresome vale of tears. We ought then to rely on Christ for strength, to grapple with our imperious lusts ; and if our faith is fixed on him, he will, as a mighty conqueror, come into our souls, and will subdue every unruly passion, and rout all the armies of our indwelling corruptions.

It

It was a principal end of Christ's death to do away the guilt of sin; he was wounded in order to expiate for transgression, and he was bruised to make atonement for iniquity; and one end of his glorious exaltation was, that he might destroy the reign and dominion of sin in his people, and after gradually carrying on the conquest, might destroy the very being of it. So that when we are vexed with the motions of sin within, we ought to cast our eyes up to the eternal hills, where Jesus sits exalted, to give repentance to his people and the remission of sins, and likewise to dispense aid to all who rely upon him by faith, to enable them to mortify the lusts of the flesh, and to crucify the desires of the mind; and if they have him to be their helper, tho' they may grapple with many difficulties, and may pass thro' many severe struggles; nay, tho' they may often appear to be foiled, yet they will come off conquerors at last, and will be brought unblemished and complete, to engage in praising their Redeemer, in those spotless realms where no sin will annoy their quiet souls, and where not so much as a disorderly motion will ruffle their peaceful breasts.

They who believe in Christ are not exempted from the evils of this world, therefore they should rely on him by faith, for a victory over the world; the great founder of our religion has assured us, that here we must
not

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not expect a place of rest, for he said thus
⁊ to his disciples, " In the world you shall
have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I
have overcome the world." He who relies on
Christ for strength, gains a conquest over all
the evils of the world ; he who does this can,
not only unruffled and serene, meet the com-
mon accidents of life, but he can stand un-
moved under the severest afflictions, for he
can quietly submit to the determining will of
God, when he knows not his meaning in
afflicting him, and he can expect a comforta-
ble end of all his troubles ; nay tho' he sees no
end of his sorrows, he can regard them as
what are mercifully designed to ripen him for
heaven ; and under the deprivation of all
outward comforts, when he looks to the fu-
ture inheritance, he can revive himself with
the believing view of the rich and enduring
substance which is there : One who rests on
Christ, can expect he will overcome difficul-
ties which are above the power of creatures
to encounter with ; he can hope for delive-
rance, when humanly speaking he sees no
way for his escape, and he can depend on
his care to supply him, when pressed with
the greatest necessities ; that man who casts
himself on Christ, expecting in him a satisfied
portion, is enabled to reject the pleasures of
the world, when they are ensnaring, and to

⁊ John xvi. 33.

despise

despise the profits of it, when they lead to sin, and tend to take him from his allegiance to God: Every person who expects from Christ a better and a more enduring substance than can be possessed here, can be quiet under all revilings and persecutions, which he meets with for the sake of the good Master whom he serves: In short, he who depends on Christ for strength, is armed against the fears of death; faith represents death to him, as divested of its sting, and strip'd of all its terrors; and it regards it as what is his friend and servant; because it is to such on whom the second death has no power, no other than the gate of heaven, and an entrance into eternal glory, where honour and immortality will be confer'd on all who remain faithful to death.

Christians meet with a great deal of trouble from the evil motions of their own hearts, and from the temptations which are in the world thro' lust; but the flesh and the world are not all the enemies they have to encounter, they are exposed to the temptations of the devil, and all the princes of darkness, who joining with this first rebel in his apostacy from God, are become the unhappy companions of his fall; therefore as we cannot be ignorant of the devices of these restless enemies, we have great need to rely on Christ for strength to resist them.

The

The devil exercises a regent power over all men, as long as they are out of Christ, but Christ has destroyed him to them who believe in him, as to his killing force against them. Our Lord was sent into the world, to subdue the great disturber of our peace, and he, as the God of peace, has deposed Satan, and hurled the old usurper from his throne. He has wounded him, and has disarmed all the powers that assist and abet him; for as the Scripture has assured us, ^z he has spoiled principalities and powers, and has made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them: by his own agony and bloody sweat, without the toil of others; he crush'd the devil's power, and when he enter'd into the presence of his Father, he drag'd the infernal powers, as vanquished slaves, at his chariot wheels.

The devil is now fetter'd, and cannot destroy a believer; he indeed traverses the world, seeking whom he may devour, but he cannot touch one of God's anointed, without a special commission; and tho' he may be permitted to disturb the quiet of a saint, yet he will never be suffered to destroy him; for the exaltation of Christ in glory is a proof, that he has vanquished the devil. If one point required of our Saviour had been left unfulfilled by him, the grave must have

^y Col. ii. 15.

been his perpetual abode; but the almighty prisoner having fulfilled all he undertook, broke the barriers of it, and being risen from the dead, as a triumphant conqueror, he has trampled under his feet Satan, our implacable enemy; as his hanging on the cross was the overthrow of the mighty potentates of hell, so his resurrection and glorious exaltation is the signal of his marvelous achievements, and is the foundation of all our comfort.

Christ has destroyed the devil, as to the prevalence of his power, and he has strip'd him of the office of being our accuser, so that he must now no more be heard as the accuser of the brethren: On this account the church is represented, in the apostle John's revelation, as praising God and Christ in a very high strain. " ^a Now is come salvation and strength, the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ, for the accuser of the brethren is cast out, who accused us to our God day and night." When is there salvation to the followers of the Lamb, and strength against their enemies, when is the empire of Christ extended, and his power that was veiled made bare, and exercised in treading down his enemies? It is when the accuser of the brethren is cast out. When Christ had offered up his blood to the justice

^a Rev. xii. 10.

of the Father on the cross, he on his ascension presented it before him in heaven, where it cries for mercy and justice; for mercy to the reconciled sinner, but for justice on Satan, the betrayer and seducer of mankind; and it procures his expulsion out of heaven, not barely as a reprobate angel, but as an accuser; none of his indictments can be of force against believers, because Christ is ready to plead the nullity of them, and to take them off as soon as they are preferr'd.

Seeing Christ has subdued the devil, when we are called forth to battle with the princes of darkness, we should go in his strength, relying on his aid and help, and we should put on no armour but what he has provided. Our struggling with the temptations of the host of hell is represented by the apostle ^b Paul, under the beautiful allegory of a close fight, in the following elegant passage, "Brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places; wherefore take to you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done all to stand: Stand

^b Eph. vi. 10—18.

therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereto with all perseverance." We must not presume to encounter our spiritual foes, unless we go forth to meet them under the conduct, and in the strength of that great leader who

* *Ἀναλαμβάνοντες τὴν θύρεσσιν τῆς πίστεως.* Some Grammarians have stupidly condemned the apostle for using a bad word, but the word *θύρεσσιν* is used by the Greek writers. Polyb. lib. VI. c. 21. p. 652. Ed. Gron. Dionys. Halicarn. Antiquit. lib. I. c. 40. p. 103. Ed. Oxon. Plut. in Coriolan. p. 217. Ed. Francf. And often by Aeneas the Arcadian, and Arrian in their books of the art of war.

Τὰ βέλη πεκυρωμένα σῶσαι. Fiery darts are mentioned by Thucydides, (lib. II. c. 75. p. 127. Ed. Oxon.) the name they bear is *πυρφόροι οἶστοι*: by Arrian, by whom they are called *πυρφόρα βέλη*, (Exped. Alexand. lib. II. c. 21. p. 96. Ed. Gronov.) and by Appian, who styles them *πυρφόρα τοξύματα*, (Bell. Mithridat. p. 194. Ed. Steph. 329. Ed. Toll.) Which name they bear in a much more ancient writer, Aeneas, (Poliorcet. c. 32. p. 1707. Ed. Gronov.) by Julius Caesar they are called *Fervefacta jacula*, (Bel. Gal. lib. V. c. 43. §. 1.

The apostle's metaphor will appear very elegant, if by the shield, useful to quench the fiery darts, we suppose him to refer to bucklers made of raw hides, or leather wet with water or vinegar: These materials, we are assured, were used by the ancients, to guard their wooden fortifications, against being burnt by fiery darts, or any other means. Vid. Aeneas. ubi sup. p. 1709.

conquer'd

conquer'd them, when to outward appearance he seemed to be most foiled by them; and then he who triumphed over them on the cross for us, will not suffer them to gain a final conquest over us: As we must have our loins girt with truth, and must have our breasts armed with integrity, so we must repel Satan's assaults by the word of God, and above all we must take to us the shield of faith, which will quench his fiery darts, and will prevent them from piercing us, and the poison of them from drinking up our spirits.

Our invisible enemies are numerous, strong, and subtle; too powerful and too cunning for us they may be, if we are left to ourselves, but if we rely on Christ for strength, they shall not overcome us; for can it be thought that our almighty Redeemer will suffer them to put by his designs of mercy on us, seeing he has manifested his power over them in throwing them from the height of heaven, when rebellion first rose among them? Can it be imagined, that he will suffer us to be confounded by them, who turned what they thought would be his ruin, even his death, which they foolishly hurried on, into their final overthrow? The devil is an industrious and indefatigable adversary; therefore relying on Christ for strength to encounter him, we should always be in a watchful posture, according to the following^d advice of the apostle Peter; "Be so-

^d 1 Pet. v. 8.

ber, be vigilant, for your adversary the devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may destroy, whom resist stedfast in faith." If we resist the lion who lurks to destroy and devour us, stedfastly relying by faith for strength on him, who upon the cross bruised the devil's head, we shall find that he will bruise Satan under our feet shortly; and that he who has actually triumphed over all the wicked spirits, who refused to submit to his sway, will in the end make us more than conquerors over all the principalities and powers of the kingdom of darkness.

The state of all men by nature is a state of alienation from God, and there can be no amicable intercourse between a God of infinite purity, and one who retains a principle of rebellion against him: He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, can never grant a favourable admission into his presence, to one who brings unpardoned guilt with him. No man can, by his own power, remove the impediments that lie in the way of his access to God, it is Christ only who can take away every thing which hinders our approach to the mercy seat; having satisfied for our sins, and appeased the anger of God, he has opened for us a way to the throne of grace; and if we come to God thro' him, the Father of mercies will not frown us from his presence, but will give us a sight of himself, with smiles covering his reconciled face, and

with

with a scepter of forgiveness filling his hand. Out of Christ he is a consuming fire, but in and thro' the Redeemer he becomes a compassionate Father to all who believe. Every one then who is in Christ ought to rely upon him by faith, for a favourable admission into the presence of God.

As long as we are out of Christ, it is impossible that we can meet with a gracious reception from that God whom we have offended, and whose justice we have provoked; for we have nothing in us, but what makes us odious to the pure eyes of his holiness and his jealousy, and tends to blow up the coals of his hot displeasure. What our state and frame is when we are out of Christ, we may easily gather from the following words, which the apostle Paul directed to the saints at ^e Ephesus: "At that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and ^f strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and ^g without God

^e Ephes. ii. 12.

^f *ἔσθαι τῶν Διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας* this had better be translated in the singular number, because there is but one covenant of grace which contains promises of mercy. Some Greek writers have used this very word in the plural, when they meant only one testament. *Ἀνοίγειν τὰς Διαθήκας*, Demosthenes in Stephan. Orat. I. p. 969, 970. Ed. Francf. several times; yet p. 771. he speaks of it in the singular number, under the title of *Διαθήκη Πασιῶν*. *Τῶν Διαθηκῶν τῆς Καίσαρος ἀνοίχθαι*, Plutarch. in Caesare, p. 740. Ed. Francf.

^g *ἄθεοι*, not properly speculative but practical atheists. The word atheist is used to denote an immoral or profligate person by the Greek writers.

God in the world." When we are without Christ, we are alienated from the commonwealth of God's spiritual Israel, and so cannot expect the privileges that belong to it; whilst we are not incorporated under him as our head, we can enjoy none of the benefits promised in that covenant, of which he is the surety and mediator; during the time our anchor is not grounded on the rock of ages, we shall never be revived with the pleasant gale of the lively hope of heaven, but shall wander in the dark, and as long as we continue unreconciled to God, we are without any regard to his honour, and so cannot expect to be admitted into his presence in a favourable manner.

It is only when we are in Christ, or are united to him by faith, that we who are naturally strangers and foreigners, are brought nigh to God, according to what the apostle^b

Τὸν ἐκέταν σέβων Ἄθιον ἄνδρα καὶ
Τοκέῦσι πικρόν.

Aeschylus Eumenid. v. 151.

Τὸν πάλαι ἐκ δουλεῖας αἰθιωπάτας
Μάτρος αἰλόντ' ἀπάταις Αἰγαμέμνονα.

Sophocles Electra, v. 123.

Αἰεὶ δ' ἄχος ὧ μ' ἐχόλωσε
Σὺ ματὴρ ἄθιος.

Idem Trachin. v. 1054.

Ἀδίκος πρόδοτις ἄπισ-
τος, ἄθιος.

Euripides Helen. v. 1162.

Ὅτι τοὺς χρησοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὖ πράττειν, ἔστι δίκαιον·
Τοὺς ᾧ ποιητοὺς καὶ τοὺς αἰθεὶς τοῦτων τ' ἀντιπῶ δῆπρ.

Aristophanes Pluto, v. 490.

ἢ Eph. ii. 13, 14, 16—19.

declared,

declared, concerning the present state of the Ephesian converts, whose past state he had described as so bad; "Now in Christ Jesus, you who were some time far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ, for he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broke down the middle wall of partition between us; — and that he might reconcile both to God in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity, thereby he came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were nigh; for thro' him we both have an access, by one Spirit, to the Father: Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Christ has remov'd all things out of the way, which might tend to bar up our access to that God whom we had offended and provoked; he has fulfilled the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us; he has put an end to the enmity which is between God and us in a state of nature, in that he has satisfied justice, and vindicated all its rights and royalties, and has appeased God's anger, by bearing all the weight and fury of it, when he stood in the place and room of sinners; and he renders us acceptable to God, and brings us into his presence, cloathed with the robe of his own righteousness, that we may stand before him without shame and blushing: If we belong to him, he perpetually intercedes for us, and by
virtue

virtue of his intercession our prayers are heard, which are put up by the help of the Holy Spirit, whom he sends into our hearts, to stir us up to plead for the blessings which he has purchased: As it is Christ only who has done all this for us, we must never presume to come into the presence of the God who searches the hearts, and tries the reins, without relying on Christ for a favourable admission; and if we rely on him, we have no just reason to fear that we shall be sent empty or disappointed away.

Since we have if we believe in Christ, such an one to appear for us, as is cloathed with our flesh, who has died and suffered for our sins, has made way for us to a throne of grace, has incircled the head of God with a rainbow, as a sign of perpetual peace, and has sheath'd the avenging sword of justice, we ought not to be afraid of approaching the divine presence, because we come not before a God who is against us, but one who is for us, having been reconciled to us. We have a Mediator to plead our cause, who has answered all legal demands, and satisfied for all injuries; who has turned the frowns of divine displeasure into smiles of love, and has converted floods of wrath into rivers of mercy; having one for our high-priest who has done all this, and seeing he is a high-priest which is over the house of God, and has the disposal of all the treasures of grace, we ought not to stand still,

still, or be discouraged because of our weakness and sinfulness, but we should apply ourselves to God with a deep humility, and a faith having its sails filled with the prosperous gale of a well-grounded confidence in Christ; according to the apostle Paul'sⁱ advice, "Having such an high-priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, and with full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Whenever we take upon us to draw nigh to God, we must have a true heart, for if we pray to God or perform any other duty, we must desire in truth to do that inwardly which we appear to do in our outward carriage; and at the time we bow the knee to the Father of our spirits, our hearts must be broke and humbled. We have a true heart in the service of God, when it is our fixed principle to do all in his worship, according to his will, both for matter and manner; and as our heart must be true, so it must be sprinkled from an evil conscience, for sin disturbs and defiles the conscience; but when the blood of Christ is sprinkled on our souls, the guilt of sin which before disturbed our consciences is removed, and the stains of it which defiled them are cleansed away: When a believing sinner has a sense of this, he is freed from the gnawing

ⁱ Heb. x. 21, 22.

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pains and tormenting accusations of a guilty conscience. If the blood of Christ is sprinkled on our consciences, it takes away the burden of guilt from it, and it signifies to us, that when a God of infinite knowledge makes no objection against us, our dim-sighted conscience ought to find no fault with us. Our conscience must not only be sprinkled with the blood of Christ, but our bodies must be washed with pure water, or we must be purged from all gross defilement of the flesh, by the cleansing and sanctifying grace of the Spirit of Christ, and then, and not before, we are meet to approach to God.

All these things must be found in us when we draw nigh to God, and we must likewise draw nigh to him in full ^k persuasion or assurance of faith: This is not to be understood of a personal assurance, which is what most of our English divines mean, when they speak of assurance: It is not here intended that we must be fully assured, that we are actually in the favour of God, before we can come to him: If a full assurance of God's love was the assurance required in all that approach him, no repenting, trembling, disconsolate sinner in this world could ever come to him; and the greatest part of Christians, after they have been long in a state of grace, would be incapable of drawing nigh to him, because

^k *Εν πληροφορίᾳ τῆς πίστεως.*

personal

personal assurance, which is when a man is fully persuaded that he is in the favour of God, is not the most common thing among true Christians; and the persons who are favoured with it have it not always, but are at times exposed to doubts and fears; besides it does not appear, that when the Scripture mentions assurance, it in any one instance means that to which we generally confine the name. The full assurance, or persuasion of faith, which we must have when we draw nigh to God, is what divines call the assurance of the object; this is when we apprehend the truth of God's promises, concerning Christ, with a firm persuasion of mind, or it is when we are fully assured and persuaded, that Christ, who is set forth to the view of our faith, in the promises of the Gospel, has ability to save us, might to procure salvation on our behalf, and infinite merit to purchase the favour of God for us. We draw nigh to God in the full persuasion of faith, when we have the best and most assured grounds to believe, that God has, according to his determinate purpose, before the foundation of the world, set forth, in the fulness of time, Christ to be a propitiation for sin, and to be the Saviour of sinners; that Christ had, by virtue of his omnipotence as God, strength to stand under the weight of the Father's fury, which was poured forth upon him as man; and had, by the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him

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bodily,

bodily, merit sufficient to purchase heaven for us; and that this great Redeemer having appeared in the flesh, and died a shameful and a painful death, has actually satisfied for the sins of his people, and taken away the enmity between God and them; and in consequence of this belief, tho' we may have our doubts and fears as to ourselves, we come to God, as a God infinitely good in himself, and infinitely gracious to sinners; and when we thus draw nigh to him, we rely on Christ for a favourable admission into his presence.

Our blessed Lord assured us, that without him we cannot come to God, when he thus declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, none comes to the Father but by me¹." We may rashly presume to come into the presence of the Lord of heaven and earth, foolishly imagining that he is all mercy, and presumptuously fancying that our sincerity and good meaning must entitle us to his favour; but if we draw nigh to him out of Christ, we can only behold him cloathed with thunder, and encircled with devouring fire; his terrors may scare us, but we can see nothing in him, if we weigh things justly, to give us the least ground of encouragement, that he will be propitious to us. We ought therefore to be very much afraid of coming to God out of Christ, and should expect a favourable ad-

¹ John xiv. 6.

mission into his presence, only when we come by faith in Christ: It is he only can still the loud thunders of justice, and can quench the scorching flames of the divine displeasure, because he satisfied justice when he bore the weight of God's anger: We must then be insensible of the greatest kindness manifested to us, and must be enemies to our own welfare, if we dare to approach the most high God out of Christ; but if in him we draw nigh to the Lord of mercies, he will not turn a deaf ear to our cries, or reject our prayers, but will kindly accept us in and thro' his beloved Son, in whom he is always well pleased.

As we should be afraid to draw nigh to God, unless we rely on Christ for a favourable admission into his presence, so depending on him, we need never fear we shall be debar'd access to God; for the apostle Paul^m has assured us, that "in him we have boldness, or freedom of speech, and access with confidence, thro' the faith of him." It is our failing if we doubt of a favourable audience, as long as we depend on Christ; for it is in him, and in him only, that we may with freedom go to the altar of God, and find this God to be our exceeding joy. We ought then not to stagger thro' unbelief, but in and thro' our great high-priest to draw nigh to God, with a holy confidence, according to the fol-

^m Ephes. iii. 12.

following advice of the ^aapostle Paul, " Seeing we have a great high-priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession, for we have not a high-priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted, like as we are, yet without sin; let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help us in every time of need." It is ground of great joy to a Christian, that he can approach the divine presence, trusting in such a high-priest as Christ is; as he is the Son of God, he has infinite merit to purchase heaven for us, and he has actually taken possession of it on our account; he has infinite knowledge to know all our wants, and infinite power to supply them; as he was man he suffered, being tempted as we are, though there was no sin in him to plant a temptation upon, and having been tempted, he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and has the tender bowels and melting compassions of the human nature, to pity us when we are weak, wandering, and out of the way. Having such a high-priest, we may come with a holy boldness to God, as a father, and when we approach him as a reconciled father in Christ, we shall find, according to the words of the sweet Psalmist ^o of Israel, that " as a

^a Hkb. iv. 14, 15, 16.

^o Psalm ciii. 13.

father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him." When we draw nigh to God as our father, we shall find mercy, even all the grace we stand in need of; as he formed us, he knows our brittle frame, and as he created us, he is acquainted with our frail composition, and in all his dealings with us he will remember, that we are but dust; he may take vengeance on our ^P inventions, and may in his fatherly displeasure visit our iniquities with the rod, and chasten us for our transgressions with stripes; but for Christ's sake, his loving-kindness he will never take away utterly from us, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail; his covenant he will not break, nor alter what has once passed his lips.

We have seen how necessary it is for Christians to rely on the mighty Saviour and preserver of men, for deliverance from all that makes against their welfare, for a right and title to what they cannot procure for themselves, and for all spiritual blessings that are to be enjoyed here; on the same great captain of salvation they must by faith rely, for an admission into the heavenly inheritance at last, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fades not away, and which is reserved for them, as the reward of the agonies, toil and death of him who was made perfect thro' sufferings, and who thro' much tribulation

^P Psalm lxxxix. 34. 35. 36.

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went

went on, in the greatness of his strength, till he opened a new and a living way for them whose sins he bore, to the paradise of the living God. As eternal life is Christ's gift, so it is his work to conduct safely all the sheep of his fold into the quiet pastures of immortality: Of this he, the great shepherd of Israel, has assured us in these ^a words, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hands." It is impossible for any created power to snatch from Christ those on whom he has laid his mighty hand, for the strength of all creatures, was it united against him, would be less than nothing, compared with his strength. Those whom he has once brought within the sacred inclosures of his fold, he will feed with spiritual good things, during the continuance of this mortal life; and when they leave this wilderness, he will open a door for them into the sweet fields of bliss, which are dressed with perpetual verdure, where they will be fed with all the dainties of heaven. If we expect to be conducted to the land of uprightness, our faith must be fixed on the great shepherd of the sheep, and then we shall want no refreshments here; and when we have passed death's dark and gloomy vale, we

^a John x. 27, 28.

shall set our feet on the hills of everlasting delight, and we shall have our kind conductor to cause us to lie down in the green pastures of immortality, where salvation will spring up fresh for ever, and to lead us beside the still waters of that river of pleasures, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the new Jerusalem, which is above.

It is by faith that we must rely on Christ for a joyful admission into the realms of peace; and it is by faith only that we have an imperfect, yet a real view of the good and pleasant land that is now very far off, where we hope to see the King in his beauty: On this account faith is called^r the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen: As it firmly believes the reality of those things which are invisible to sense, it gives them, as it were, a present actual subsistence in the mind, which is a great encouragement to a believer. When by faith we can get up to the top^f of Pisgah, and can view the landscape

^r Heb. xi. 1.

^f There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Eternal day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain:
There everlasting spring abides,
And never with'ring flowers;
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heavenly land from ours.
Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dress'd in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan roll'd between.

scape of blessedness which lies before us, we shall not be afraid to pass the dark flood of death, which like a narrow sea divides the country of pure delight from our land of sorrow and pain: If we trust in ourselves, we shall be ready to start back from the brink of those bitter waters; but if we rely on Christ by faith for strength to pass thro' them, and behold, with a believing view, the happy world whither we are going, as nothing here below will court our stay, so all our gloomy fears will scatter, and the clouds of our doubts will be removed; for certainly that exalted Redeemer will not suffer us to be swallowed up by death, who has actually swallowed up death in victory; but will waft us over the troubled and tempestuous stream, and will safely land us on the opposite shores of light and peace.

It is impossible for us fully to conceive, what joys will ravish us, and what pleasures

But timorous mortals start and shrink
 To cross this narrow sea,
 And linger shiv'ring on the brink,
 And fear to launch away.
 O could we make our doubts remove
 These gloomy doubts that rise,
 And see the Canaan that we love
 With unclouded eyes:
 Could we but climb where Moses stood,
 And view the landscape o'er,
 Not Jordan's streams, nor death's cold flood
 Should fright us from the shore.

Watts's Hymns, ii. 66.

will

will regale us, when we come to behold the face of our Redeemer in righteousness, and when springing from the grasp of death, we shall awake in the world of spirits, in his likeness. In the Scriptures the glory of heaven is sketch'd out to us, as far as is suitable to our imperfect capacities, by an assemblage of the ideas of such things, as are apt to be most pleasing to men; but the description given of the other world is greatly heighten'd, when we are assured that the glory of it is above the conception of mortals; for we are told by the apostle¹ Paul, from the Prophet Isaiah, "Eye has not seen, neither has ear heard, neither have enter'd into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for such as love him." Tho' we cannot fully conceive of the glory which God has prepared for us, if we are among the number of such as love him, yet if we consider some appellations, which are given it in Scripture, we may, in some small degree, be able to judge what it is.

It is stiled a^u kingdom, and it is a kingdom that cannot be shaken, overturned, or invaded by enemies; it is a kingdom where there are no slaves, no oppression, no disorders, no confusion, no outcries of injustice, no complaints of wrong, and no jarrings be-

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 9. comp. Isa. lxiv. 4.
in many other places.

^u Luke xi i. 32. and

tween superiors and inferiors ; and it is a kingdom where the subjects are exactly regulated by the will of their sovereign, where obedience is a pleasure, where even the subjects reign, and where the spirits of just men made perfect keep up a happy harmony among themselves, correspond for their mutual comfort, and conspire together to celebrate the praises of God and the Lamb, with crowns of glory circling their brows, and palms of victory gracing their hands : The crown of this kingdom ^w is stiled a crown of righteousness : It is purchased by the righteousness of Christ, and by him shall be set on the heads of all who fight the good fight, and keep the faith, and shall never be taken off ; no thorns shall be entwisted with this diadem ; and when it adorns the head it will rejoice the heart, it will be wore without fear of losing it, and no grating sorrows or carking cares shall attend it.

Heaven is described as a place of rest ; it is a calm where there is no interruption, and a haven where there is no storm ; hence it is said of * those who die in Christ, “ Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours.” The happy dead rest from the labours of sickness, weakness, weariness, poverty, and every other outward affliction ; they rest from persecution and the

^w 2 Tim. iv. 8.

* Rev. xiv. 13.

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rage of wicked men; they rest from the malice, subtilty, and temptations of Satan; they rest from the toil of their own unbelieving and despairing thoughts, from all natural corruptions, from all evil habits of mind, and from all disorders in the affections: When the bright day-spring of a glorious eternity shall shine upon those who have followed the Lamb thro' much tribulation, they shall be at ease, and never shall be molested; the day shall ever smile upon them, and the night shall never cover them; there shall be no more mourning, nor crying, nor trouble, nor pain, nor death, but sorrow and sighing shall for ever fly away; for God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and the Lamb shall feed them, and lead them to fountains of living waters, in which they may with pleasure bathe, and of which they may drink freely, for their consolation. They shall be confirmed in their happy condition, and shall have the fullest assurance of their continuing in it to eternity; this will set them on the highest pinnacle of blessedness; no imperfection or appearance of evil will be found among them.

The happy world above is sometimes represented as an inheritance, and particularly as an inheritance in ^{*} light: Light is what cloaths the whole creation with beauty, how

^{*} Col. i. 12.

excellent then must this inheritance be, where there is light without darkness, and brightness without clouds! especially if we consider it is incorruptible and undefiled, and such as will never fade; for as there are no flaws in the foundation, so there will be no decays in its structure; no enemy will be able to undermine the foundation, or scale the battlements of this building, seeing God is the builder of it; no sin will come within these happy walls, and as no evil spirit can come to tempt, and no lust can find harbour, this undefiled inheritance will be filled with universal holiness, and unspotted innocence; Here the spring will always bloom, and every thing will ever be fresh and flourishing: The length of the pleasure the saints will enjoy will not cloy, but whet their appetite, and it will by continuance grow sweeter and sweeter. The heavenly inheritance abounds with riches: The apostle^z John, in describing the new Jerusalem, has gather'd together all things which are most valuable here on earth, to give us a glimpse of the glories which are hereafter to be revealed: The wall of this great city is of jasper, its foundations of all manner of precious stones, every gate is of one single pearl, its streets are paved with gold, transparent and glittering like chrystal; but this is not all, the Lamb casts abroad the beams of his

^y 1 Pet. i. 4.

^z Rev. xxi. 18, 19, 20.

eternal

eternal light, to throw a lustre upon it: These metaphorical terms do not convey to us an adequate idea of heaven, but they may serve to give us a twilight discovery of this inheritance, which is glorious and magnificent, beyond what thoughts can conceive, or words express; they may amplify our conceptions of it, but they can no more fully illustrate its glory, than a bright cloud can paint the beauty of the sun. When we think on the riches of the heavenly inheritance, we must conceive of them by things infinitely beneath them, and ideas too low and earthly are apt to glide into our minds, and mix with our thoughts; therefore when we have the highest notion of heaven, we must conclude there is a vast chasm between our most raised apprehensions, and the glory which is there. When we enter into the gates of the city, we shall find that the riches of it will suit the majesty of the King who dwells in it: These riches are full of variety; they are such as numberless ages will never exhaust, and part of our happiness will rise from the vigorous operations of our faculties, which will not fail to find out every day greater rarities, and more agreeable novelties in the heavenly treasures. In the undefiled countrey all veils shall be rent asunder, and we shall see how the promises are fulfilled; every providence which is unsearchable will be explained to us, all the secrets of prophecy will be laid open to us, we shall

shall see what we are now ignorant of, and shall enjoy what at present is far removed above us. A glorified saint, when he is purified from all dross, and freed from all dusky impressions, when he is conducted into the palace and presence chamber of the immortal King, will find that the florid beauty, and inexhaustible fertility of the objects there to be met with, will continually give him fresh matter for contentment, and the things which will remain to be seen, will ever appear to him as worthy of contemplation as those he has viewed.

We may imagine a judicious inquisitive man, finding some singularity in every wave of the sea, discovering some new plant almost every step he takes, and seeing a different glory in every star, every time he casts his eye upwards; we may suppose him thinking on all these things with satisfaction; we may allow him to converse with friends of the same curious taste, and imparting his useful discoveries to them; now could we farther suppose him to be always moving about the world, sometimes by the sea shore, by the banks of gliding waters, or by the side of purling streams; at other times in pleasant gardens, in shady groves, in gloomy woods, on variegated mountains, in flowry fields and in cool valleys, always learning something, in company with friends of the same gust with himself, with health of body, and ease of mind, still looking
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ing up to God, acknowledging his boundless goodness, and adoring his incomprehensible perfections; could we suppose all this, we could form to ourselves but a faint image of the unspeakable happiness which is to be enjoyed in heaven.

One ingredient of the happiness of the other world will be, our being made like to Christ in holiness; there his image will never be defaced, but the beautiful lines of the new creature will grow every day more clear, our new nature will glitter, without any filth of sin to sully it, and holiness will hold the sceptre, without any lust to shake it. When we come in the happy world above to be cloathed in the white attire of innocence, it will be impossible for one evil thought to slide into our minds; there will be perfect light in our understandings, to move us to behold our Maker; there will be a right motion in our wills, inclining us to center in God; for they will be ballanced with sanctity, and our affections will be set upon right objects, and that in a due measure, and will be so knit to the most High, that they will continually send forth the most vigorous acts of love to him; and when we think on the greatness of his undeserved love to us, the most noble ardors, and the most refined transports will be raised in our breasts. After the great rising day, our spotless souls will inhabit bodies which will be no clogs to their motion, they will be incorrupt.

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corruptible and indefatigable, they will shine as the sun, they will be uniform in their constitution, and their contentments will be perfectly pure and delightful, they will be heavenly; and as they shall ever enjoy the bloom of fresh immortal youth and beauty, so they shall be altogether assisting to the quickness of our spirits.

Another ingredient of our happiness above will be close communion with God; in those peaceful regions he will not cloath himself with thunder, stand behind the wall, look thro' a lattice, or be as a way-faring man, but he will bring us as near to himself as creatures can be, and every thing in him will be pleasant to us, we shall keep up fellowship with all the divine persons; indeed we are favoured only with occasional visits from them, as long as our abode is on these mountains of separation, but this will not be our case when we are free from the clogs of the body of sin and death; for we shall have full and uninterrupted communion with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, when we are so happy as to take up our residence on the mountains of spices.

The Scripture, when it speaks of the happiness of heaven, makes a principal part of it to lie in our seeing God; we shall have as immediate and as full a vision of him, as is consistent with a finite state, and we shall never be deprived of our sight of him. We shall see Christ Mediator as he is, and shall know him

him as we are known ; and we shall admire him, because his person will be more glorious than we can imagine it here to be. Every believer, when he sees his incarnate God in glory, will with extasy and rapture cry out ; This is he, who put on the humble cloathing of my abased nature, but has now chang'd his infirmities to glory ; this is he, who was a mean man upon earth, but is now raised above the hosts of heaven ; this is he, who endured the contradiction of sinners, but now receives the worship of angels ; this is he, who ignominiously hung on the cross between two thieves, but now all creatures behold him with trembling ; this is he, who suffered death below, but now holds the key of life and death ; this is he, who was laid in a gloomy grave, but now he shines beyond the sun ; this is he, who was thought unworthy to tread the earth, but now he walks on the heavens, and makes the world to quake ; this is he, in whom I once believed, but with a faith imperfect, and eclipsed with darkness, but now I see him fully ; this is he, whose presence I desired, whose absence I lamented, whose hatred I feared more than death, and whose love I reckoned better than life, now am I embraced in his arms, and shall be solaced with the sweetness of his company for ever.

The supreme blessedness of heaven will lie in the full enjoyment of God : In that happy

py countrey, a believer will be blessed in the everlasting enjoyment of God, and will likewise know how happy he is in thus enjoying him. God is the chiefest good; as he is more majestic than we can imagine, so he is more excellent than we can conceive; there is none in heaven we ought to desire in comparison of him, for he can be our portion, when our flesh and our heart shall fail. When our earthly tabernacle begins to crack and fall in pieces, when our senses grow dull, and our flesh is benumb'd, when death sits upon some of our members, when our blood is chill, our spirits flag, and our heartstrings break, if we rely on Christ by faith, we may have abundant support; for when our eyes shall see the light no more, we shall see God in his glory, and instead of the creature shall enjoy the Creator. Certainly when the highest faculties of our souls, acted by the most noble principles, are eternally exercised about the best and most glorious objects, the Father who chose us, the Son who redeemed us, and the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us, joys substantial and divinely great must delight our rectified minds, and the most desirable pleasures must refresh our refined appetites.

It must be owned, this is but a faint sketch of the glory of heaven, and it would not be set off with a better lustre, if enquiries were made, where the precise place of it will be, or endeavours were used to marshal the heavenly

venly host, and to range the spirits of just men made perfect, according to the employments they were engaged in here below; these would be mean and vain intrusions into things we cannot see. We may gather from these imperfect hints, that the glory of the invisible world is transcendently great; this happiness was purchased for us by Christ's infinite merit, and to this unspeakable blessedness we hope to be conducted, relying by faith on our beloved and our friend; who has ascended on high, to take possession of the heavenly mansions for us, and is gone to prepare places in his kingdom, to which he will actually bring us, when our work of faith and labour of love is ended. And as many enemies will endeavour to obstruct our march to the heavenly gates, we should always trust in him who has opened the way to them, and not lean to our power and ability; and then we may expect that the mighty Redeemer, on whom we depend, will lead us to the land of uprightness, where all the fury of opposition will cease, and all obstructions will be removed, and where, dressed in the robes of glory, we shall, with ease and rest, and without distracting cares, join with all who have gone before us, in praising the Father of mercies, who chose us to salvation, before the beginning of the world, the Son who redeem'd us to God by his blood, and the blessed Spirit who sanctified us, and all the elect people of God.

*We

We may gather how noble, useful, and necessary a grace faith is, from the excellent nature of the benefits for which it relies on Christ. As no mercies can be greater than those for which we trust in Christ by faith, so this must be allowed to be itself of superlative value. It is not possible for us to enjoy greater blessings, than those for which we depend on the great captain of our salvation. What can be more desireable than for us, who are children of wrath, who have Adam's tainted blood running in our veins, and who have made ourselves still more obnoxious to God's justice by our actual sins, than to meet with the full and free pardon of all our guilt? This is merited for us by our great high-priest, who made atonement for our sins, by offering up himself a sacrifice for us. What can be more for our comfort, who have provoked the justice of the Sovereign of heaven and earth, and who have by our guilt render'd ourselves hateful to the pure eyes of his holiness and his jealousy, than to be accepted as righteous in the sight of our Judge? This is procured for us, by the imputation to us of the merit of our mighty Redeemer, who has wrought out and brought in for us an everlasting righteousness. What can be more useful for us, who are weak, and who are continually ready to faint, and tire, and die, than to be enabled to perform duties in a right manner, to be invigorated to run our race, and to be

be assisted to carry on a successful warfare against sin, Satan, and the world? For all this we receive strength from our risen Saviour, who has made an end of sin, and destroyed the power of the author of evil. What privilege can be greater, than for us who are strangers and foreigners, who are rebels and apostates, to have freedom of access to the mercy-seat of the Father of lights? A way to the throne of grace is open'd for us, by that powerful advocate, who intercedes at the right hand of the Father on our account. What richer gift can be bestowed upon us, who are heirs of hell, than an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and a crown which will never fade away? This is given by that King of glory, who ascended on high, to prepare mansions of blessedness for us.

When a Christian considers the transcendent excellence of the blessings, for which he must rely on Christ by faith, as he will see that the most full provision is made for his salvation, so he will never be able to express his gratitude to so kind a Saviour, whose love will be amplified by the consideration of its being undeserved. With what high flights of heavenly affection, and with what extatic raptures of holy joy, should he break forth into the praises of that merciful Redeemer, who purchased his happiness at the expence of his own blood; not forgetting, at the same time, to express his grateful sense of the free

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love

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love of the Father of mercies, who chose him to salvation, when he passed over the angels that sin'd. When he thinks on these divine persons, contriving and effecting his happiness, all his cheerful passions may awake, and stir him up * thus, in high anthems, to express his gratitude to them.

Thee Father first I'll sing omnipotent,
 Immutable, immortal, infinite,
 Eternal King; thee author of all being,
 Fountain of light, thyself invisible,
 Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sit'st
 Thron'd inaccessible, but when thou shad'st
 The full blaze of thy beams, and thro' a cloud
 Drawn round about thee, like a radiant shrine,
 Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear,
 Yet dazzle heav'n, that brightest Seraphim
 Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes.
 Thee next I'll sing of all creation Lord,
 Begotten Son, divine similitude,
 In whose conspicuous count'nance without cloud,
 Made visible, th' Almighty Father shines,
 Whom else no creature can behold; on thee
 Impress'd th' effulgence of his glory abides,
 Transfus'd on thee his ample spirit rests.
 He heav'n of heav'ns, and all the powers therein
 By thee created, and by thee threw down
 Th' aspiring dominations, thou that day
 Thy Father's dreadful thunder did'st not spare,
 Nor stop thy flaming chariot-wheels, that shook
 Heav'n's everlasting frame, while o'er the necks
 Thou drov'st of warring angels disarray'd.

* A liberty is used here to borrow this noble hymn from the incomparable Mr. Milton, (*Paradise lost*, Book III. v. 372, &c.) with some little alterations.

Back

Back from pursuit thy powers with loud acclaim
 Thee only extoll'd Son of thy Father's might,
 To execute fierce vengeance on his foes;
 Not so on man, him thro' their malice fall'n,
 Father of mercy and grace thou didst not doom
 So strictly, but much more to pity incline:
 No sooner did thy dear and only Son
 Perceive thee purposed not to doom frail man
 So strictly, but much more to pity inclined,
 He to appease thy wrath, and end the strife
 Of mercy and justice in thy face discern'd,
 Regardless of the bliss wherein he sat
 Equal to thee, offer'd himself to die
 For man's offence. O unexampled love!
 Love no where to be found less than divine!
 Hail son of God! Saviour of men! thy name
 Shall be the copious matter of my song
 Henceforth, and never shall my tongue thy praise
 Forget, nor from thy Father's praise disjoin.

C H A P. VII.

Of the evidences of Saving Faith.

IT is a matter of great importance to every Christian, with respect to his comfort, to know whether he truly has looked to Christ in a way of believing, whether he has fled to him for refuge, whether he has received him, and whether he relies upon him for the pardon of sin, for righteousness to justify him, for strength to uphold him, for a favourable admission into the divine presence, and for eternal life. Many who have been

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made partakers of the faith of God's elect, and so have stay'd themselves on Christ, and rested on him the God of their salvation, have not been able to discern the reality of their faith, because they have expected to find such evidences of it, as are not the fruits of faith in all that believe; but looking for such high degrees of comfort, as the proofs of faith, as are only vouchsafed to some and not to all, and not finding them in themselves, they have been ready to conclude themselves to be in a state of unbelief, and so have raised legions of unnecessary terrors round them, and have walked long in darkness, and not seen the light of comfort.

It is however our duty to examine and try, whether we have faith or not, for as the safety of our persons, and the eternal well-being of our souls cannot be secured, unless true faith is wrought in our hearts; so the quiet of our minds can never be without ruffles, the peace of our conscience cannot be undisturbed, and the comfort of our lives will not be constant, if we have not some ground to think, we believe in Christ. If we imagine we have faith, when we have it not, we are in a dangerous condition; certainly then we ought to try, whether we have faith or not, that we may not please ourselves with a fiction instead of a reality, and amuse our fancies with a shadow, instead of substance. Many bear up themselves with a blind confidence,

dence, that their state is safe, and buoy up themselves with a foolish ungrounded persuasion, that it shall go well with them at last, who are nearest the greatest misery, because they take it for granted they have faith, and feed themselves with empty imaginations, but never bring their pretended faith to the word, to be tried by it. Many sinners are steel'd in unbelief, and presumptuously despise all the threatenings of the law, because they blockishly fancy faith to be nothing else than to be confident, and never to be afraid of hell; when indeed saving faith is no other than the soul flying to Christ, from the fear of eternal perdition; we may give a lively description of a sinner of this sort, in the words of the prophet * *Isaiah*, which he used, to set forth a stupid

* *Isaiah* xliv. 20.

There cannot be a more terrible *Sarcasm*, or an instance of more *picquant* *satyr*, than in this elegant passage, v. 13—19. The Carpenter stretches out his rule, he marks it out with a line, he smoothes it with planes, and figures it out with a compass, and makes it after a human likeness, according to the beauty of a man, that it may remain in the house: — He hews him down cedars, and takes the cypress, and the oak, which he strengthens for himself among the trees of the forest; he plants an ash, and the rain nourishes it; then shall it be for a man to burn, for he will take thereof and warm himself, he kindles it, and bakes bread with it, he makes a God, and worships it, he makes it a graven image, and falls down before it, he burns part of it in the fire, with part thereof he roasts flesh, and eats, and is satisfied; he warms himself and says, I am warm, I have seen the fire; and with the rest of it he makes a god, even his graven image; he falls down to it, and worships it, and prays to it and says, Deliver me for thou art my god. They have not known nor understood, for he has shut their eyes that they cannot see, and their

stupid idolater, who made a god of one part of a log, and lighted a fire with the rest of it, that " he feeds on ashes, a deceived heart has turn'd him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand?" That we may not be found such presumptuous unbelievers, we ought, with earnest cries and supplications to the eternal Spirit for light, set about the tryal of our faith. When we are forward to try whether we have faith or no, it is a hopeful sign, that this useful and necessary grace is wrought in our hearts. If we would know whether we are chose of God to salvation, we must enquire whether we have the faith of God's elect or not. This is a question of the utmost concern to all serious persons; many who have been very eminent in faith, in resolving this question, have been too ready to lay down those things which they have experienced, as general evidences of faith, and so have greatly puzzled and confounded such as are bore down with fears, because they have not consider'd, that there are babes, as well as strong men in Christ; and low shrubs, as well as tall cedars, in the garden

hearts that they cannot understand: And none considers in his heart, nor has knowledge and understanding to say, I have burnt part of [the log] in the fire, I have baked bread upon the coals of it, I have roasted flesh with it, which I have eat; and shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I bow down to the stock of a tree?

of grace. In commiseration then to the mourners in Sion, this enquiry ought to be answer'd with all the tenderness, care, and caution possible.

When we seek to know whether we have saving faith, we may justly conclude that we have it, from the truth of our sanctification. If we are holy, we are believers, but without holiness there can be no settled principle of faith in us. It may often happen, that we may not be able to get the least satisfaction about our faith, when we look for something in ourselves to prove it by; because when we are under darkness and desertion, or when our corruptions are violently agitated, in the hour of temptation, we are not then capable of passing a judgment on our inward frame, seeing at such a time our inherent grace is like the waves of a troubled sea, carried hither and thither by the wind: Our circumstances even after we are believers may be such, that we may not be able to draw any evidence of faith, from our sanctification; but what we cannot do, when we are bemisted in our spirits, deserted of God, or tempted by Satan, we may do at another time, by considering what lives we lead, what general design we promote, what we feel of a sanctifying principle in us, and what treatment and entertainment we give our lusts, to which we were enslaved while we were in our ignorance.

There can be no true faith without holiness, because whenever faith is wrought by the Spirit of God, as a sinner's state is chang'd, so his nature is renew'd. When faith goes forth to Christ, to partake of his righteousness, a sinner's state is changed, and he is justified; and when it relies on Christ for the grace which he communicates, the nature of a sinner is renewed, and he is sanctified; holiness has no share with faith in receiving Christ's righteousness for justification, but it is always found, where justifying faith is wrought.

Where the fruits of holiness are not to be found, it is impossible there can be any true faith, because actions always follow life. Faith, which is a spiritual life, and the most noble kind of life, must produce congenerous actions, or bring forth fruits which are peculiar to it; and the fruits of faith unfeigned are a pure heart, where no filthiness is suffer'd by consent to lodge, and a good conscience, which separates from all the defilements of a wicked life. The influences of faith are extended thro' the whole soul, and its life is spread by a vigorous circulation: Wherever faith is set up in the mind, as a convincing light, to discover the sweetness and excellency of Christ, it will discover itself in the will, by an eager appetite to feed on his pleasant fruits, and will raise a heavenly flame in the affections, whereby they will be closely united to him as the chiefest good. They

They who receive Christ by faith, tho' their faith first looks to him as a justifier, in the pardoning virtue of his blood, to absolve from all guilt, yet it always receives him as a refiner, or in the purifying operation of his blood, to cleanse the inwards of the heart, and the outskirts of the conversation. If we would know then that we have saving faith, we must shew forth the truth of our faith by the holiness of our lives. Faith brings us to believe, that God is the chiefest good, and that Christ is our only Redeemer; and when we believe this, we cannot but love, as our supreme good, that God besides ^b whom we can have none in heaven, to be the satisfying object of our desires, and with whom there is none on earth that we can compare, because he can be our portion and strength, when our flesh and our hearts fail; and it can be no otherwise, than that our hearts must glow with the utmost warmth of affection to Christ, by whose stripes we are healed, by whose righteousness we are justified, and by whose resurrection to glory we have a continued flow of life secured to us.

There are many sinners, who are desirous that Christ should bear the wrath of God for them, but they cannot be brought to imitate him in his perfect holiness; they would have salvation by the Redeemer of God's elect, but

^b Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26.

they deny him their service; they would contentedly enjoy the sweetness of the cross of the great preserver of men, but they cannot endure the weight of his yoke; they are willing enough to partake of the benefits purchased by the Saviour of Israel, but they are for being left to a liberty of sinning against him; and they are not averse to have the glad tidings proclaimed in the gospel of the prince of peace, to be the matter of their joy, but they will not admit the law of the King of righteousness to be the rule of their lives. All who are of this disposition have no faith, but are unbelievers: as we know the body to be dead, when it performs none of the functions of life; so we may know a professed faith to be a dead faith, if it does not discover itself in works of holiness.

There have been found too often in the world, profane and ungodly pretenders, who have been loud in magnifying free grace, who yet have wickedly turned it into wantonness, in venting this hellish, as well as ridiculous principle, that men may be saved, tho' they live as they list: and among such as profess religion, there have not been wanting conceited boasters of faith, who have taken care never to justify their faith by their works: all pretence to faith in Christ, without a desire to abound in the fruits and works of

righteousness, is fit to be hissed at. Nothing can be more shocking to reason, and a more daring insult on common sense, than to see a person boasting of his faith, and yet shewing to all the world he has none, by his continual commission of known and wilful sins. No one who gives himself the least time to think, can imagine that a person can be influenced with love to Christ, which must always be included in the notion of faith, who in deeds dishonours him, and by that shews he takes delight in what is hateful to him. That faith without works is dead, and that all boasts of it are vain, the great apostle ^d James, the kinsman of our Lord, has assured us, in the following words: "What profit is there, brethren, if a man says he has faith, and has not works, can faith save him?—Faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone: yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works: thou believest that there is a God, thou dost well, the devils believe and tremble: but wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" It is the greatest jest in the world, for any to arrogate to himself a spiritual knowledge of Jesus Christ, who manifests, that he does not know him, in the power of his resurrection, by his con-

^d James ii. 14. 17—20.

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tinuing in the commission of sin, which he came to destroy, as to its dominion, as well as to expiate in its guilt. The true and standing test of the reality of our faith in Christ is our doing his commandments; without this evidence of faith, whatever we may pretend to, we shew that we know not him in whom we ought to believe: of this we are assured by the favourite disciple and bosom friend of the Saviour of mankind, the apostle^e John: he was as free from uncharitableness, and had as much true Christian love as any mere man who has appear'd in the world; yet he has not scrupled to pronounce all to be enemies to Christ, whatever pretences they may make to be his friends, who do not delight to perform his commands, in the following passage. "Hereby we know that we know Christ, if we keep his commands: He that says, I know him, and keeps not his commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but as to one who keeps his word, in him is the love of God truly perfected; hereby we know, that we are in him; he who says he abides in him, ought himself to walk as he walked." It is an easy thing for persons to make big pretences to what they are strangers to, and to utter great swelling words of vanity, in commendation of what they do not from the heart esteem; therefore all that is said in

^e i John ii. 3—6.

commendation of faith, by such as will not justify their faith by their works, ought to pass for empty words, which may be loud and sonorous, but have no ideas couched in them. It is only by doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God, by living ^f soberly, righteously, and piously in this evil world, that we can evidence, that saving grace has appeared to us, that the day-spring from on high has mercifully visited us, and that true evangelical faith is wrought in our hearts: we ought therefore to evidence the sincerity of our faith by the holiness of our lives; and then, when he whom having not seen we love, shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admir'd by all who believe, we shall behold his face with comfort: and in the mean time we may look for that as a blessed hope, which will be matter of great horror to unbelievers, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour; because when he who is our life shall appear we shall appear with him in glory, and to all eternity shall be refreshed, by seeing him as he is, and knowing him in some measure, as we are known.

If it is our sincere desire to put it out of doubt, that we believe in Christ, we ought, at the same instant, to set about what we are apt to call in question. When we enter upon a strict enquiry about our faith, we

^f Titus ii. 11, 12.

can hardly expect satisfaction in this weighty point, merely by framing answers to such objections as partial unbelief may raise; for when we have solved many doubts, and answered numerous objections, still doubt will rise upon doubt, and objection will spring up after objection; and we shall be like one in travelling, who having ascended a great height, sees hills rowring over hills, and so is discouraged from going forwards, because when he set out, he imagined much sooner to have attain'd the utmost summit, which was presented to his view, as not at a very great distance from him. Neither must we think to come to a satisfying knowledge of our faith by disputes about it, for when we begin to entertain disputes about faith, where will they end? they will increase our doubts, but will never deliver us from our fears; we shall be like a man who ventures into a labyrinth without a clue and without directions, he may often fancy himself very near to the place towards which he is tending, when on a sudden, trusting only to his eye, he enters into a fresh maze, and going on in it, is insensibly whirl'd from the center he is seeking, and is in a little time, as far as he can judge, more remote from it, than when he first went in.

If we, whilst it is dark and intricate to us, whether we believe or no, listen to objections, and raise disputes, we shall scarce be able to know which way to direct our steps, being
puzzled

puzzled with mazes ; and we shall not discern the right path, but shall still be perplexed with errors : now as all these doubts are permitted to spring up, in order to the farther clearing our evidences, if we really have faith, the only sure way we can take to discern with how much art these windings are at last turn'd to one center, and to see where this regular confusion will end, is, even when many fears will rise in our breasts, and many questions will start up in our mind, to endeavour to practise afresh the thing about which we are in doubt. We should resolve thus with ourselves ; Do we doubt whether yet we believ'd ? we will, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, bring the matter to a final issue ; for we will, trusting in his almighty aid, set about the thing we question. If we take this method, we may hope to come to a good understanding, relating to our faith. If we cannot tell whether we believe, and whether Christ be ours, at the same time that fears prevail, we must, in Christ's strength, stir up ourselves with as much eagerness to embrace him, as if the arms of our faith had never been clasp'd about him before. Was the time spent by us in hearty endeavours to act faith on Christ, which we spend in distracting and gravelling enquiries, whether we have believed or not, the matter about which we doubt would become certain, and the thing we question would appear evident ; and were we more in

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striving to believe the promises of the God of truth, than in arguing whether we have believed them, we should find satisfaction concerning our faith, we should climb over the mountains of opposition which despondency raises in our way, and the earthquakes of our unbelieving fears would be hush'd and would be still.

In order to put it out of doubt, whether we believe or not, we should look to the direct acts of faith, which are essential to it, and are the principal act of it. These are the motions of the soul, going out of itself, towards Christ. Assurance is from a secondary act of faith, or from the consequent reflection of faith, whereby the soul returns to itself, to find what is within, in order to comfort; but the direct acts of faith are, when the soul of a believing sinner looks not back upon itself, but casts its eye forwards to Christ, and moving towards him, stays itself upon him. The not distinguishing between these different acts of faith, is the reason why so much perplexity and confusion is often to be found in the minds of Christians. When we seek to know whether we believe, we should look to the direct and principal acts of faith, which are necessary in all who are saved. It is the comfort of a Christian to know whether he believes, but it is essential to a state of salvation, that he does really believe; he is always call'd to be found in the direct acts

acts of faith, which are necessary to his well-being, and must not be omitted, but be prefer'd to all comfortable evidences whatever; because without these he may safely get to heaven, whereas without directly relying on Christ, no sinner can be saved. Therefore when we hesitate, whether we have faith or no, the great thing lying before us is, not to know that we have faith, but to exercise faith in its direct acts: when we have darkness and see no light, we must trust in the name of the Lord Jesus, and stay ourselves upon him our great and mighty God; this is to cast anchor in the dark, and in a storm, and it carries the greatest safety in it.

The direct acts of faith, as they only are essential to salvation, so they honour God more than any other acts of faith. It is extremely difficult, to refine us throughly from the old leaven of legalism, and to strike us entirely off from the conceit of our being able partly to work out our own salvation. Whilst we are in this state of trial, something of the covenant of works is always springing up with the purest acts of grace in us, and mixes with our faith; therefore we may all, if we narrowly converse with our own spirits, observe, that there is too often a desire in us to believe God only for his works sake, or for his doing something in us, but not for his word's sake, or because of his promise. We choose to believe God because of internal holiness,

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uprightness, comfort, peace, joy, assurance, or something else, which he has wrought in us; but we are too backward to believe him on his bare word, or for what he has freely promised without us. This legal spirit, being so natural to all men, and being not entirely eradicated in those who are renew'd, God for the abolishing it often hides from a Christian the light of his countenance, and necessitates him to live by the direct acts of faith, or by believing his promises, without the comforting sight of inherent grace. To believe in God by a direct act of faith, or without any sensible evidence, is the noblest way of believing, it brings most glory to him, and he has en-tailed the greatest blessing on it.

Faith, in the common notion of it, is the credit we give to a revelation, upon the authority of the revealer; therefore if the revelation we believe, is a revelation from God, that faith which receives it, must be divine. To believe a thing on the evidence of sense, is not properly believing, farther than sense confirms to us, what we believed before; so that the less our faith stands in need of the sense of comfort, the stronger it is, because the promise of God is a firmer foundation for our faith, than all the comfort in the world; for this may deceive us, and in it there may be delusion, but the promise of God can never be frustrated, and in it there can be no falshood. Faith believing the promise of God is

is stronger than that faith which has comfort attending it; and when any persons thus act faith, we may say of them as our Lord did to his doubting apostle $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ Thomas, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." When we, thro' the darkness remaining among us, do not find in ourselves those gracious dispositions which we desire, we must cast ourselves on the truth of God, in the promises he has made us of pardon and life thro' Christ, and must take hold of them, as if we had never apprehended them before; and when we find no grace in ourselves, to offer to Christ, we must fetch grace from the full and overflowing fountain of all grace, which is in him.

When a Christian, upon trial, can safely conclude, that he has saving faith, and is enabled to put forth all the acts of it, he is in a happy condition, and has a sure ground of great joy. Such an one may sit down contented, and may say thus with himself. The great things which I am call'd to believe are above my full comprehension, and are not agreeable to my corrupt reason; but to my faith, and to my rectified reason, they are easy; and when I find God has reveal'd any thing too big for the grasp of my understanding, I am content to know but in part: I am too forward, naturally, to be puffed up with

$\text{\textcircled{c}}$ John xx. 29.

high thoughts of myself, but thro' grace I can own that my fulness is but emptiness, my strength is no better than weakness, and all my righteousnesses are but filthy rags: As I come into the world, I know not which way to cast my eye for help, but I can look to a dying Jesus for salvation, and to a risen Saviour for support? I am by nature a child of wrath, and know not whither to fly for help, but thro' the tender mercies of the most High, I have fled for refuge to Christ, and laid hold on him the hope set before me: I am originally the plant of a strange vine, but I am now engrafted into the true vine; being united to Christ, I receive him, and being in him, I hope to bring forth fruit to his praise. I had a load of guilt lying upon me, but I trust in him who finished transgression, and made atonement for iniquity, for a free pardon; I have nothing to recommend me to my judge, but I shall be fully justified by him who has brought in everlasting righteousness; of myself I cannot perform duties aright, I cannot go on in my way, nor can I encounter my manifold enemies, but leaning on my beloved, I can do all things in a way of duty, I can not only keep my path, but can go from strength to strength; and as to my enemies, I hope to carry on a continual victory over sin, to be able to neglect the world's smiles, and to despise its frowns, and to be more than a conqueror over the powers of darkness;

darkness; as God is an absolute God, I dare not approach him, but depending on the great High Priest of my profession, I can venture into his presence with freedom and boldness; hell is my justest desert, but seeing my exalted Saviour has entered into heaven, as my forerunner, I will hope that he will bring me where he is, to behold his glory: Come then, my soul, take thy ease and rejoice, for thou hast much good laid up for endless years, be watchful against sin, and if thy beloved, provoked by thy failings, should withdraw himself and be gone, trust in him, and tho' it is in the dark, stay thyself upon thy God; for if for a small moment he should hide his face from thee, yet with everlasting kindness he will have mercy upon thee, and will bring thee to that happy blessed place, where to eternity thy eyes shall behold him in his beauty, without any veil or cloud. Happy then is he who trusts in the Lord, and blessed the man whose hope Christ Jesus is!

We must be very much against our own comfort, if we strive not to put it out of doubt that we believe. We must then prove our faith by the reality of our sanctification; for tho' this will not in a time of darkness, desertion, or temptation, be a steady ground for us to go upon, in proving our faith, yet at some time or other it may be a sure evidence of it, for we should never expect satisfaction whether we believe or not, merely by framing answers to our

own objections, or by entertaining disputes about our faith, but when we doubt whether we have faith, we should set about what we question; and we ought to have a special regard to the direct acts of faith, which are essential to salvation, and not confound them with the reflective acts of faith, which are necessary to consolation, but leave it to the Spirit, who is a sovereign agent, and gives not an account of his matters to any, to afford us what degrees of comfort he pleases. If we make trial of our faith in this method, by the concurrent operation of the Spirit, we shall find it of great use and advantage to us, in all the shaking temptations, and perplexing exercises which we may meet with, whilst we wander in this vale of tears, and are forced to take up our abode in this country of separation.

C H A P. VIII.

Of a weak Faith.

WHERE saving faith is once wrought in the heart of a sinner, it can never be totally rooted out; but tho' the principle and habit of faith cannot fail, yet it may fail, in its lively acts; these may, for a time, be under a suspension, and believers who have a principle of saving faith, may for a season
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seem as if they were without it. Many who have been strong in faith, and have given glory to God by trusting in his truth and faithfulness, when the circumstances they have been in have tended rather to lead them to distrust, have yet, at times, failed with respect to acting faith in a lively manner, and have shew'd, that let persons be ever so eminent in any grace, yet as long as sin cleaves to them, and dwells in their mortal bodies, the law of their members will resist the law of their minds. We have examples in the sacred records, of such as have come under a suspension of the lively acts of faith, who yet have not been destitute of true faith.

We have scarce a greater instance of the strength of faith, than is to be met with in the patriarch Abraham, yet he was not without the starts of unbelief. He has justly been stiled the father of the faithful, as he was eminent in the acts of faith; and one mighty and signal act of faith he put forth, when he was prepared to offer up ^a Isaac. In this he struggled with the greatest difficulty, for it was a service that could not but force nature to recoil, and was sufficient to rend a heart of flint; he was to bind his son, to lay him on the altar, to shed his blood, to divide his body, and to reduce his mangled limbs to ashes; certainly it must turn his bowels within

^a Gen. xx.

him, to do thus to his son, who was his chief delight, whom he had much pray'd for, and earnestly desired, who was of years to answer his pious father's wishes, and who above all was the son from whom the promised Messiah was to descend, who was the hope of Abraham's salvation; for the promise of God to him was, ^b that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed; but this universal blessing was to be convey'd to the believing world, only thro' ^c the loins of Isaac. When natural affection in Abraham said, touch not Isaac, for he is thy endeared son; reason might say, slay him not, for from him the Messiah must spring, who is thy salvation; but when sense and reason thus rose up in arms against him, and block'd up his way, with the greatest obstructions, he neither disputed nor defer'd his obedience to God, but by faith leap'd over all mountains of difficulty; for with a steady resolution he drew the knife to slay his son, and the sacrificing him was so fully intended by him, that in God's esteem it was as much, as if Isaac's life had been actually taken away. Abraham shew'd his readiness to obey the particular command of God, which was to sacrifice the only son of his hope, but at the same time he believ'd the special promise of God, that from Isaac Christ should come; and what gave his faith

^b Gen. xii. 3.^c Gen. xxi. 12.

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a victory over all opposition, and removed all impediments raised by natural affection, and imperfect reason, was, his being fully persuaded ^d that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead: This made him resolve to do what God commanded, not doubting but he, who is faithful and true, would take care to fulfil every tittle of his promise, and not questioning whether, supposing Isaac should be killed, the promise would live in his resurrection from the dead. This was Abraham's faith, and it is worthy of admiration, yet this great believer was not without the starts of unbelief; for he who, at one time, had faith to believe the power of God could raise Isaac from the dead, at other times had not faith enough to believe the power of God was sufficient to guard him from the ^e Egyptians and Philistines; but lest he should be exposed to danger, by the beauty of his wife, retreated to a dark ambiguous expression, in saying she was his sister. Thus he flag'd sometimes in the exercise of his faith; and as his faith stands recorded, in order to our imitating him in it, and admiring him for it, so we hear of his acts of unbelief, and they are mentioned, not for our following him therein, but that we may avoid them, and may not be utterly discouraged, or left without hope, when we meet with the same pull-

^d Heb. xi. 19.

^e Gen. xii. 10—20; xx. 1—13.

backs, in the course of our weary pilgrimage, thro' a world of sin and sorrow.

We may see that there was, on a time, a suspension of faith, as to the lively acts of it, in David: He had the great character given him by God himself, of being ^f a man after his own heart, because he had faith to believe whatever God promised, and a heart prepared to execute whatever he commanded: We have one instance ^g of the great strength of his faith: When the town of Ziklag, the only earthly possession he had, was burnt, and his wives, children, and all his substance were carried away by the Amalekites, his sorrow must needs be great; and we may readily think, there was no need of any addition being made to his burden, but in this rueful case his distress was much heightened, by his own followers threatening to stone him: Yet in the midst of this great perplexity, his faith fail'd not, but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. When this eminent person was plunged as deep, in the abyss of trouble, as ever he was before or after, and when all the waves and billows of distress beat upon him, faith kept his head above the water, and enabled him safely to ride out the storm. But at another time, we find his faith faltring, and his heart failing within him: He unbelievably stumbled at

^f 1 Sam. xiii. 14.

^g 1 Sam. xxx. 1 — 6.

the providences of God, when to appearance they seem'd to cross his promise: Tho' God had promised that he should be king of Israel, and tho' not^b only his friend Jonathan, who might have expected the crown, but his enemy king Saul had assured him, that they knew he would be king, yet in a fit of discontent, fearing the restless and unwearied malice of Saul, he took a rash resolution of leaving his country, and retiring into the land of the Philistines; sayingⁱ thus within himself, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me, than speedily to escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel, so shall I escape out of his hand." In this hasty resolution, there was a distrust of the promise of God! God had promised he should be king of Israel, but he distrusted the promise and providence of God, even after he had given him repeated demonstrations of his care over him, and kindness to him: Thus we see, that the man after God's own heart, who sometimes acted great faith and confidence in him, was not free at other times from unbelieving acts.

It is hardly possible to find a more remarkable instance of the suspension of the lively acts of faith, where yet there is a

^b Sam. xxiii. 17. xxiv. 20.

ⁱ xxvi. 1.

principle of faith, than that of the apostle Peter. Our Lord Jesus Christ, by his effectual prayer, laid in a sufficient recruit beforehand, that his affectionate disciple's faith might not fail, as to its principle, yet the exercise of the warm apostle's faith was stop'd, and he acted unbelief, when he denied his master*. There were three gradations in Peter's denying Christ, and as the last temptation was most violent, so the last act of unbelief rose highest. In the high-priest's palace, one of the maids charged him with being one of Jesus's followers and companions, and said, "Thou too wast with Jesus of Galilee;" he denied it before them all, or spoke so loud, that all might hear, "I know not what thou sayest." After the first time of his denying his master, when he was retired into the porch, in order to avoid being observed, another maid saw him, and said to the by-standers, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth:" he denied it with an oath, and said, "I do not so much as know the man:" Before he had contented himself with simply denying Christ, but now he seal'd his falshood with an oath: When he had denied Christ twice, and the second time had sworn to it, he was a third time tempted, and fell in with the temptation; and as he was tempted in a higher degree

* Mat. xxvi. 69—74.

than he was before, so he went farther in a compliance with the temptation; this time the accusation was urged against him with more peremptoriness and confidence, and a probable reason was urged to back it; one present said to him, "Certainly thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, thy speech discovers thee:" on this, "he began to curse and swear, saying, I know not the man;" he had before added swearing to his deceit, and now he superadded execrations to his perjury: The more horly Satan and his instruments pursued him, the more he yielded to them, and was ensnared by them: His faith was gravell'd, and unbelief got the upper hand; when he denied his Lord, and added to it cursing and swearing; yet, tho' the acts of his faith were suspended, he had a principle of saving faith remaining in him; and when the kind master, whom he had so unworthily disown'd, gave him an affectionate wishful look, he immediately retired, and with godly sorrow bitterly lamented his shameful fall.

The instances which have been given from Scripture shew, that where true saving faith is to be found, it may flag and falter; and that persons, who have been most eminent for the exercise of this useful and necessary grace, have come under a suspension of its lively acts: And the same is confirmed by experience; if Christians look into their own hearts,

hearts, they do not find them at all times equally lively and vigorous in believing, and they may observe the same of most, who have obtained like precious faith with themselves. These weaknesses and defects, which attend faith, tho' they do not eventually ruin a saint, yet they occasion him much sorrow of heart, deprive him of the sense of God's strong consolations, and often provoke his heavenly Father to chasten and correct him, with great severity: Therefore it greatly concerns a Christian, in order to preserve his comfort, to enquire what method he should take, to keep his faith in exercise, and to prevent the frequent suspension of its lively acts; that so he may not be overcome by the starts of unbelief, and provoke God to leave him to go on heavily, without the light of his comforts shining upon him, to guide him thro' the dark and dreary vale of despondency and desertion.

If we desire to keep our faith in exercise, we must carefully avoid every sin: Sin deprives us of the quickening and comforting presence of God, and when this is our case, our faith loses its activity, its wings droop, and it is ready to fail. God is as able to assist his people at one time as another, but when he leaves them to themselves, it is because they have provoked him by sin, which separates between him and them, and causes him to hide his face from them; according

to what the prophet¹ Isaiah said to the backsliders of the Jewish church, "The Lord's hand is not shorten'd, that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." The iniquities of a people are a thick wall, to separate between them and God, and their sins are as a cloud to hide the comfortable views of his presence from them; and when sensible communion is stop'd between God and believers, and when his face is veil'd from them, they are left to wander in the dark, and their faith, as to the acts of it, is brought low; so that, if we would not have the lively acts of our faith interrupted, we must maintain a constant equal distance from all sin.

Christians ought, in order to keep up the vigour of their faith, to be much in the original act of it, which is to come to Christ, and to God by him, as persons guilty and ungodly in themselves: The omission of this prime and original act of faith, gives opportunity to pride to start up in their souls, and the lowest degree of indulged pride imbecillitates their faith. There is no way so proper to keep down pride, and to preserve faith in lively exercise, as to come every day to Christ, as miserable, guilty, and polluted

¹ Isa. lix. 1, 2.

sinners, who have no help or strength of their own. The best of saints sin often, and they should apply themselves afresh, upon every new sin, to the advocacy of Christ, that he may take away their new sins, and put life into their faith. The beloved ^mdisciple, at the same time that he exhorted those to whom he wrote, not to sin, took care to inform the weary and heavy laden, where they might meet with relief, under the pressure of new sins, in these words, "My children these things write I to you, that you sin not; but if any one sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins." The good apostle, like a skilful pilot, steer'd a middle course, and with great judgment, labour'd to keep believers from the contrary sins of presumption and despair; and when he inform'd them of the obligations lying upon them, not to disgrace the Gospel they

^m Παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸ πατέρα, Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον, 1 John ii. 1, 2.

The word *Παράκλητος* is used for an Advocate by an excellent Greek author.

Οὗτοι μὲν ἦσαν ἀχέαι τοῖς τε, καὶ τῶν τὰ δίκαια λέγοντων *Παράκλητοι*. Dionys. Halicarn. Antiq. lib. xi. c. 37. p. 683. Ed. Oxon. p. 717. Ed. Sylb.

Philo has declared it to be necessary for all who worship God, to make use of his Son as an Advocate for gaining the remission of sins.

Απογναῖον γὰρ ἦν τὴν ἐρώμενον τῷ τῷ κόσμῳ πατρί, *Παράκλητον* χρῆσθαι τελειοπύτῳ τὴν ἀρετὴν υἱῷ, πρὸς τὴν ἀμνηστίαν ἀμαρτημάτων, καὶ χρηρίας ἀφθονιότητι ἀγαθῶν. De vita Mosis lib. iii. p. 673. Edit. Lips.

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profess'd by sinning, he directed them to Christ, as an Advocate, lest they should despond, when at any time they were overtaken by sin. Our faith is acted on Christ at first for pardon, and it must be acted on him at all other times for the same; and the repetition of this its prime act conveys strength to us, to act it in all other cases. The perpetuity of our justification results from Christ's sitting at God's right-hand, as a powerful illustrious Advocate, who causes the odors of the infinite merits of his death and sufferings to ascend and spread before the Father; and thereby pleads to all the indictments of the law, answers the accusations of Satan, and prevents sin from making any breach of the amity between God and us; but the life of our faith is perpetuated, by the renewed applications which the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, enables us to make to the advocacy of Christ, for the pardon of new guilt, and acquiring new strength to our faith. We ought every day to make reflections on our tottering condition, we must bewail our miscarriages, we should lament our slips and falls, and under all these, it is our duty to turn our eye to our great and only Advocate, to acquaint him with our condition, and to retain him afresh for our cause.

In some sense there is a great difference between the access of a believer to God thro' Christ,

Christ, for the pardon of his new sins, and the coming of a sinner to God, thro' the same great high-priest, that, by the merits of the blood of sprinkling his sins may be pardon'd. When a believer comes to God, he may plead interest, and he ought to do it; he may say, O Lord, my just and righteous Judge, as well as my merciful Father, it has been my desire to believe in Christ, and to put my soul into his hands, that I may be saved for ever: I therefore with a humble boldness, and a filial confidence, would desire to appeal to thee, whether my heart has not been drawn out to accept of Christ, as the unspeakable gift of thy infinite love: As far as I am able to judge, I hope, I have been sincere in surrendering and resigning myself to Christ. On the other hand, when a sinner comes first to God for pardon, he can say nothing of this; he can only say, Lord, I am vile, what shall I say to thee, I deserve thy wrath, and can do nothing to merit thy favour, but as thou callest sinners by the still small voice of thy Gospel, and freely promistest remission of sins to all who come to thee thro' a Mediator, I would come to thee, that I may be sprinkled with the blood of Christ, that all the sin which lies on me may be taken off, and that a firm alliance may be made between thee and me, which may never be broke. A believer approaches the most High as a reconciled God, for so he is to him,

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tho' he may not know it; but a sinner betakes himself to the Father of mercies, as a God that is inclined to shew free grace to him, and on Christ's account, stands ready to be reconciled to him: A believer presents himself to the King of heaven, as a friend and a child, or as one actually in a state of amity and nearness to him; whereas a sinner makes his access to his offended Sovereign, as a stranger and a revolter, desiring to have his state of enmity and distance changed into a state of reconciliation: A believer draws nigh to the Father of lights, as one who has experienced the pardoning and purifying efficacy of Christ's blood, who is justified by his righteousness, and on his account enroll'd among the number of the children of God; he may indeed question whether he was ever pardon'd, justified, or adopted, but his misconceptions and ungrounded fears do not make his pardon, justification, and adoption less true or real; on the contrary, a sinner casts himself at the feet of a judge whom he has provoked, that on Christ's account his sins may be forgiven, his person accepted, and he may be received by God as his adopted son.

Tho' in some respects there is a great difference between a believer's coming to God for the pardon of his fresh sins, and a convinced sinner's first coming to him, thro' Christ; yet in other respects, there is none

at all, for both must come as ungodly. One as well as the other must come, apprehending himself to stand in absolute need of the application of Christ's blood, and of staying himself on him, and convinced that if he should be found out of him, the guilt of his sin would sink him into hell. The believer when he comes, must count himself no more worthy or righteous in his own person, than the sinner, and must equally look off from himself to Christ; he must lie under a conviction that he has no more than the sinner, to merit God's favour; and that it is free sovereign grace, in his heavenly Father, now to accept him, as well as when he came first to him by believing. How ought it to encourage Christians, and comfort their hearts, that they may with the greatest freedom come, all their days, as unworthy! and the more sensible they are of their unworthiness, the quicker approach they ought to make to God, who is never backward to pardon the ungodly.

Every believer, whose heart is set upon acting faith in a lively way, must derive new strength from Christ every day: When a man is in Christ, all that is in himself must be as nothing in his reckoning, and he must learn to live the life of faith, by a new derivation of power and virtue from Christ, every day. When a believer is so overseen, as to attempt to do things in his own strength,

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he provokes God to leave him to himself; and it is no wonder if on this we find his faith faltering and flagging. The chief reason why a Christian finds such great alterations in his faith, is this, when it has been mightily strengthened and enliven'd by God, in any ordinance, he goes from it highly pleased with what he has found; but takes no care to have his faith influenced by a new power from Christ, before he comes to engage in duty again; and because he does not derive new strength from his Saviour, before he enters on fresh service, he finds his faith grow weak. When we come to any duty, supposing it be prayer, it is by the almighty power of Christ only, that we can be enabled to pray with a lively faith, and so to pour out our petitions as to open the treasury of God's immense bounty. God's ancient church was sensible of the need of a quickening power from him, that she might pray aright to him, and accordingly supplicated him for new life that she might call on his name, in these words, "Quicken us, and we will call on thy name." The believers who breathed out this request, had faith and sanctification, they stood in a filial relation to God, and were his church and peculiar people, yet they were so far from trusting to the stock of their habitual inhe-

Psalm lxxx. 18.

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rent grace, that they depended on the author and giver of spiritual life for new quickening, before they thought themselves furnished with strength to call on his name. We may, thro' mistake, look upon it to be a light and easy thing, to engage in duty, but if ever we are made sensible of our weakness, we shall find a necessity of deriving new strength from Christ, to act faith in every duty; and when we are about to enter on the service of God, we shall address ourselves to our great Intercessor, in the words which his apostles used to^o him, when he was present with them on earth, "Lord increase our faith." If we have not a renewed derivation of power from Christ in ordinances, our faith will grow feeble whilst we are engaged in them, and if it gains not strength, it will lose its activity; therefore a Christian should continually betake himself to his Saviour, that he may invigorate his faith, to perform duties in a way pleasing to God.

Such as wish to have their faith kept lively, ought to leave it to the all-sufficient Spirit, to bestow upon them what degrees of comfort he, in his infinite wisdom, pleases, but they should stir up themselves to act faith, when they may have no sense of comfort. Faith, tho' it is a humble, yet it is a venturous grace, and when we put forth ventu-

^o Luke xvii. 5.

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rous acts of it, its life is maintain'd, and it is often crown'd with comfort. Christ when on earth encouraged a venturous faith, with expressions of the highest approbation; an instance of this kind we have, in his healing the paralytic, who was let down to him thro' the tiles: they who brought this poor man, were not discouraged at the obstructions which lay in their way: Christ was encompassed with a croud, the house where he was preaching was full, and the door was stop'd by the throng; but their faith won its way thro' all difficulties, and they resolv'd that no impediments should hinder them from coming to Christ; and when they could find no other way to get to him, they broke up the roof of the house, and from thence let down the sick person on his couch, and placed him before him: When Christ saw the faith which was in the heart of the sick man, and the venturous acts of faith put forth by his friends, he was greatly pleased with what they did, and wrought a cure on his soul, by pronouncing those gracious words, "Man thy sins are forgiven thee;" at the same time that he cured his bodily disease, by saying, "Rise, take up thy couch, and go to thy house."

Such another instance we have, in his carriage to the poor woman, who had been^a

^a Luke v. 18—24. ^a Mark v. 25—34. Luke viii. 41, 48.

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Such another instance we have, in his carriage to the poor woman, who had been^a

^a Luke v. 18—24. ^a Mark v. 25—34. Luke viii. 41, 48.

troubled

troubled twelve years with a bloody flux : She ventured to act faith on Christ, when she had no assurance of being heal'd by him ; she believed him to be the Son of God, and was satisfied, if she could touch the hem of his garment, she should be restored to health, for she said, " If I may but touch his cloaths, I shall be whole." Thus she believingly ventured, but she was so far from being assured before-hand, that Christ would treat her kindly, that when he enquired who touch'd him, she, with fear and trembling, fell at his feet, doubtful whether he would discover displeasure or favour to her : What she did was so pleasing to the healer of diseases, that he bid her be of good comfort, and depart in peace ; and put a great honour on her faith, when he said, " Daughter thy faith has made thee whole : " and when he thus signally approved her faith, it is not to be questioned but he put more strength into it.

Whenever we find our faith weak, and ready to fail, we should cast our eyes to the eternal hills, where Jesus our Saviour sits exalted, and should beg of him to increase it ; and at the same time we should venture ourselves entirely in his hand, and then we may hope, that he will strengthen our flagging, feeble faith, which may be but like a bruised reed, and will cause it to spring up into a tall cedar, whose deep root is secured against all overturning blasts, and whose towering height

height nobly entertains the eye; that so we may stand firm to the end, and may shew forth the virtues of him who is the author and preserver, and will be the finisher of our faith.

If we desire, that our faith may be kept from faulting and flagging, we ought to be always upon our guard against every opinion, the drift of which is to lower the author and finisher of it; because every thing that tends to lessen our Redeemer's glory, and to detract from what he has done for us, weakens our faith, unhinges our hope, and destroys our confidence: Therefore as we should avoid those as the spreaders of the most dangerous plague, who would reduce our Saviour to the low rank of a creature, so we should be afraid of partaking of the infectious leaven of such, as would bring us off from looking for our salvation from Christ alone, and would persuade us to expect that from our faith, repentance, sincerity, and obedience, which was procured for us by his agonies, toils, and death: And at the same time that we are for exalting Christ to the utmost, we should avoid the extreme of those, who under pretence of magnifying our Saviour's infinite merit, pretend to a liberty to act as they will; because, whatever big words we may speak, we do not sincerely trust in the infinite merit of the sacrifice our Lord offer'd up, as our priest, unless we ma-

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nifest the sincerity of our faith, by submitting to him as our King.

It shews that persons have no desire to be saved by Christ, when they take pains to degrade him. None can better judge of his worth, than those, who having wash'd their robes in his blood, and by his aid pass'd thro' great tribulation, are brought to behold his face in righteousness; they suffer no diminishing thoughts concerning him to find the least harbour in their spotless breasts; but in the company of angels and archangels, with the highest strains of rapture, praise and adore him. As long then as Christians are travelling thro' the dark and gloomy vale of life, they should not be backward to ascribe the highest honours to him who was slain, and has redeem'd them to God by his blood, which they will do, without ceasing and weariness, when passing out of time into eternity, they shall come to be for ever with the Lord, in the peaceful realms of light and immortality, where their faith will be turn'd into sight, and their hope will be swallow'd up in enjoyment. 7 JU 66

To the one only wise, almighty God, three divine persons, the Father, who chose us to salvation, before the foundation of the world, the Son who became man, and redeemed us from sin by his blood, and the Holy Spirit who works faith in us, and all the elect people of God, be supreme glory and honour ascribed, now, henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

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